



## My Prayer

I would not walk apart from Thee,  
My dearest Lord and friend,  
And miss the choicest, sweetest gifts  
Thy gracious love would send;

I long to clasp anew Thy hand  
And feel Thy tender care,  
While pressing on with conquering might,  
Through faith renewed in prayer.

Impart new strength for what awaits  
For work, or weal, or woe;  
Enfold me close, till, through the gates,  
Thy glory I shall know.

—[Mary A. Hartshorn.

---









THE  
BOW IN THE CLOUD:

AND THE  
FIRST BEREAVEMENT.

BY  
REV. JOHN R. MACDUFF, D.D.,  
AUTHOR OF

"Morning and Night Watches," "Words and Mind of Jesus,"  
"Footsteps of St. Paul," etc.

---

NEW-YORK:  
ROBERT CARTER AND BROTHERS,  
No. 530 BROADWAY.

1879.

## DR. MACDUFF'S WORKS.

---

MEMORIES OF PATMOS, . . . . .	\$2.00
MEMORIES OF OLIVET, . . . . .	2.00
COMFORT YE, COMFORT YE, . . . . .	1.50
NOONTIDE AT SYCHAR, . . . . .	1.50
MEMORIES OF GENNESARET, . . . . .	1.50
THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST. PAUL, . . . . .	1.50
SUNSETS ON THE HEBREW MOUNTAINS, . . . .	1.50
THE SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK, . . . . .	1.50
THE PROPHET OF FIRE, . . . . .	1.50
CLEFTS OF THE ROCK, . . . . .	1.50
ST. PAUL IN ROME, . . . . .	1.25
THE GATES OF PRAYER. A Book of Private De- votion, . . . . .	1.00
THE GATES OF PRAISE, . . . . .	1.00
FAMILY PRAYERS, . . . . .	1.25
MEMORIES OF BETHANY, . . . . .	1.00
WORDS AND MIND OF JESUS, . . . . .	50
MORNING AND NIGHT WATCHES, . . . . .	50
THOUGHTS OF GOD, . . . . .	50
THE BOW IN THE CLOUD, . . . . .	50
WELLS OF BACA, . . . . .	50



## First Day.

### SOVEREIGNTY.

"The Lord reigneth."—Ps. xciii. 1.

No Bow of Promise in the "dark and cloudy day" shines more radiantly than this.

GOD—*my* God—the God who gave *Jesus*—orders all events, and overrules all for my good!

"*When I,*" says He, "*bring a cloud over the earth.*" He has no wish to conceal the hand which shadows for a time earth's brightest prospects. It is He alike who "brings" the cloud, who brings us *into* it, and in mercy leads us *through* it! His kingdom ruleth over all. "*The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.*" We are tenants at will; but, blessed thought, at *God's* will. He puts the burden on, and keeps it on, and at His own time will remove it!

Beware of brooding over second causes. It is the worst form of atheism! When our most fondly-cherished gourds are smitten—our fairest flowers lie withered in our bosom—this is the silencer of all reflections, “The LORD *prepared* the worm!” When the Temple of the Soul is smitten with lightning—its pillars rent—“*The LORD is in His holy Temple!*” Accident, Chance, Fate, Destiny, have no place in the Christian’s creed. His is no unpiloted vessel left to the mercy of the storm—no weed left to the sport of the fitful waves. “*The voice of the LORD is upon the waters!*” There is but one explanation of all that befalls him: “*I will be dumb, I will open not my mouth, because THOU didst it.*”

DEATH seems to the human spectator the most capricious and wayward of events. But not so. The keys of *Hades* are in the hands of this same reigning God! Look at the Parable of the Fig-tree. Its prolonged existence, or its doom as a cumberer, forms matter of conversation in Heaven; the axe can not be laid at its root until God gives the war-

rant! How much more will this be the case regarding every "Tree of Righteousness, the planting of the Lord?" It will be watched over by Him, "lest any one should hurt it." Every trembling fibre He will care for; and if *made* early to succumb to the inevitable stroke, "*who knoweth not in all these, that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?*" (Job. xii. 9).

Be it mine to merge my own will in His; not to cavil at His ways, or seek to have one jot or tittle of that *will* altered; but to lie passive in His hands; to take the bitter as well as the sweet, knowing that the cup is mingled by ONE who loves me too well to add one ingredient that might have been spared!

Who can wonder that the sweet Psalmist of Israel should seek, as he sees it spanning the lowering heavens, to fix the arrested gaze of a whole world on the softened tints of this Bow of Comfort—"THE LORD REIGNETH, LET THE EARTH REJOICE."

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD."

## SECOND DAY.

### A LOVING PURPOSE.

“The Lord hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.” —  
Ps. xxxv. 27.

WHAT is ‘Prosperity?’ Is it the threads of life weaved into a bright tissue? a full cup—ample riches—worldly applause—an unbroken circle? Nay, these are often a snare—received without gratitude—dimming the soul to its nobler destinies. Often *spiritually*, it rather means God taking us by the hand into the lowly Valleys of Humiliation; leading us as He did his servant Job of old, out of his sheep, oxen, camels, health, wealth, children, in order that we may be brought to lie before Him in the dust, and say, “*Blessed be His name!*”

Yes! The very reverse of what is known in the world as *Prosperity* (generally) forms

the back-ground on which the Bow of Promise is seen. God smiles on us through these rain-drops and tear-drops of *Sorrows*! *He* loves us too well. He has too great an interest in our spiritual welfare to permit us to live on in what is *misnamed* "*Prosperity*." When He sees duties languidly performed, or coldly neglected—the heart deadened, and love to Himself congealed by the absorbing power of a present world, He puts a thorn in our nest to drive us to the wing, and prevent our being grovellers forever!

I may not be able now to understand the mystery of these dealings. I may be asking through tears, "Why this unkind arrest on my earthly happiness? Why so premature a lopping of my boughs of promise? Such a speedy withering of my most cherished gourd?" The answer is plain. It is thy *Soul Prosperity* He has in view. Believe it, thy truest EBENZERS will yet be raised close by thy ZAREPHATHS (*the place of furnaces*). His afflictions are no arbitrary appointments. There is a righteous *necessity* in all He does. As He

lays His chastening hand upon thee, and leads thee by ways thou knowest not, and which thou thyself never wouldst have chosen ; He whispers the gentle accents in thine ear, "*Beloved I wish above all things that thou wouldst prosper, and be in health.*"

Rest in the quiet consciousness that all is well. Murmur at nothing which brings thee nearer His own loving Presence. Be thankful for thy very cares, because thou canst confidently cast them all upon *Him*. He has thy temporal and eternal "prosperity" too much at heart to appoint one superfluous pang, one redundant stroke. Commit, therefore, all that concerns thee to HIS keeping, and leave it there !

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD."

## Third Day.

### THE SAFE RETREAT.

“A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”—ISA. xxxii. 2.

“A MAN!” This first word forms the key to this precious verse, It is “*The MAN* Christ Jesus!”

And when and where is He thus revealed to His people as their hiding-place?” It is, as with Elijah of old, in the whirlwind and the storm! Amid the world’s bright sunshine, in the calm of tranquil skies—uninterrupted prosperity—they seek Him not! But when the clouds begin to gather, and the sun is swept from their firmament; when they have learned the insecurity of all earthly refuges, *then* the prayer ascends, “*My heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.*” The Earthquake—the Tempest—the Fire—and *then* “the still small voice!”

Sorrowing believer, you have indeed a Sure Covert—a Strong Tower which can not be shaken! The World has its coverts too. But they can not stand the day of trial. The wind passeth over them, and they are gone! But the louder the hurricane, the more will it endear to you the *abiding* Shelter; the deeper in the clefts of this ROCK, the safer you are.

A MAN! Delight often to dwell on the *Humanity* of JESUS—you have a Brother on the Throne! a “living Kinsman;”—One who “knoweth your frame;” and who, by the exquisite sympathies of His exalted Human Nature, can gauge, as none other can, the depths of your sorrow.

An earthly friend comes to you in trial; he has never known Bereavement, and therefore can not enter into your woe. Another comes; he has been again and again in the Furnace; his heart has been touched tenderly as your own; he *can* feelingly sympathize with you. It is so with JESUS. As *Man*, He has passed through every experience of suffering. He has Himself known the storm from which He



offers you shelter. He is the ROCK, yet "a MAN!" "Mighty to save;" yet mighty to compassionate! "IMMANUEL," *God with us!*" He is like the Bow in the Material Heavens, which, while its summit is in the clouds, either base of its arc rests on earth; or like the Oak, which, while it can wrestle with the tempest, yet invites the feeblest bird to fold its wing on its branches!

Mourner! Go sit under thy "Beloved's shadow with great delight." Hide in His wounded side! The hand which pierced thee is ordering thy trials; He who roused the storm is the hiding-place from it;—and as thou dost journey on—gloomy clouds mustering around thee—let *this* bright Bow of comfort ever arrest thy drooping eye—"In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren. \* \* \* For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD."

## Fourth Day.

### THE REASON FOR CHASTISEMENT.

“Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.”—HEB. xii. 6.

WHAT! God *loveth* me when He is discharging His quiver upon me!—emptying me from vessel to vessel!—causing the sun of my earthly joys to set in clouds? Yes! O afflicted, tossed with tempest—He *chastens* thee BECAUSE He *loves* thee! This trial comes from His own tender, loving hand—His own tender, unchanging heart!

Art thou laid on a *sick-bed*—are sorrowful months and wearisome nights appointed unto thee? Let this be the pillow on which thine aching head reclines—*It is because he loves me!*

Is it *bereavement* that has swept thy heart and desolated thy dwelling? He appointed that chamber of death—He opened that tomb

—*because he loves thee!* As it is the suffering child of the family which claims a mother's deepest affections and most tender solicitude, so hast thou at this moment embarked on thy side the tenderest love and solicitude of a chastening Heavenly Father. He loved thee *into* this sorrow, and He will love thee *through* it. There is nothing capricious in His dealings. LOVE is the reason of all He does. There is no drop of wrath in that cup thou art called upon to drink. "I do believe," says Lady Powerscourt, "He has purchased these afflictions for us as well as every thing else. Blessed be His name, it is a part of His covenant to visit us with the rod." What says our adorable Lord himself? The words were spoken, not when He was on earth, a sojourner in a sorrowing world, but when enthroned amid the glories of heaven "*As many as I LOVE, I rebuke and chasten* (Rev. iii. 19).

Believer! rejoice in the thought that the rod, the chastening rod, is in the hands of the living, loving Saviour, who died for thee!

*Tribulation* is the King's Highway, and yet that highway is paved with love. As some flowers before shedding their fragrance require to be pressed, so does thy God see meet to *bruise* thee. As some birds are said to sing their sweetest notes when the thorn pierces their bosom, so does He appoint affliction to lacerate, that thou mayest be driven to the wing, singing, in thy upward soaring, "*My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed!*" "Those," says the heavenly Leighton, "He means to make the most resplendent, He hath oftenest His tools upon." "Our troubles," says another, "seem in His Word to be ever in His mind. Perhaps half the commands and half the promises He gives us there, are given us as *troubled* men."

Be it ours to say, "Lord, I will love Thee, not only despite of Thy rod, but *because* of Thy rod." I will run into the very arms that are chastising me! When Thy voice calls, as to Abraham of old, to prepare for bitter trial, be it mine to respond with bounding heart, "*Here am I!*"—and to read in the

Bow which spans my darkest cloud, "*He chastens* BECAUSE *He loves !*"

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD"

2\*

## Fifth Day.

### IMMUTABILITY.

“I am the Lord, I change not ; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” MAL. iii. 6.

THE *Unchangeableness of God*. What an anchor for the storm-tossed ! “Change is our portion here !” Scenes are altering. Joys are fading. Friends ! some of them are removed to a distance—others have gone to the longest home of all ! Who, amid these chequered experiences, does not sigh for something permanent—stable—enduring ? The vessel has again and again slipped its earthly moorings. We long for some secure and sheltered harbour.

“I CHANGE NOT !” Heart and flesh may faint—yea, *do* faint and fail—but there is an unfainting, unfailing, unvarying GOD ; all the changes in the world around cannot affect

Him. *Our* own fitfulness cannot alter Him. When *we* are depressed, downcast, fluctuating, our treacherous hearts turning aside "like a broken bow"—*He* is without one "shadow of turning." "*God who cannot lie,*" is the superscription on His eternal throne; and inscribed on all his dealings.

"*I change not!*" For whom does He span the darkened sky with this Bow of comfort? It is for "THE SONS OF JACOB," His own covenant people. Those clothed like Jacob of old, in the garment of the true "*Elder Brother,*" through whom they have obtained their spiritual inheritance.

Precious name! It forms a blessed guarantee that nothing can befall me but what is for my good. I cannot doubt His faithfulness. I dare not arraign the rectitude of His dispensations. It is covenant love which is now darkening my earthly horizon. This hour He is the same as when He "*spared not His own Son!*" Oh, instead of wondering at my trials, let me rather wonder that He has borne with me so long. It is of the Lord's unchanging

*mercies* that I am not *consumed*. Had He been *man*, changeful, vacillating, as myself, long ere now would He have spurned me away, and consigned me to the doom of the cumberer. But, "*My thoughts are not your thoughts—neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.*" He is without any variableness. Yes! in this dark and cloudy day I will lift up mine eyes to the covenant token, and sing through my tears, "*Happy is he that hath THE GOD OF JACOB for his help—whose hope is in the Lord his God.*"

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD."



## Sixth Day.

### DIVINE SYMPATHY.

"I know their sorrows."—Exod. iii. 7.

MAN cannot say so. There are many sensitive fibres in the soul the best and tenderest *human* sympathy can not touch. But the PRINCE OF SUFFERERS, He who led the way in the path of sorrow, "knoweth our frame." When crushing bereavement lies like ice on the heart—when the dearest earthly friend cannot enter into the peculiarities of our grief, JESUS *can*, Jesus *does*! He who once bore my *sins* also carried my *sorrows*. That eye, now on the throne, was once dim with weeping! I can think in all my afflictions "He was afflicted;" in all my tears, "JESUS WEPT."

Israel had long groaned under bondage. God appeared *not* to "*know*" it. He seemed,

like Baal, "asleep;" yet at that very moment was His pitying eye wistfully beholding His enslaved people. It was *then* He said, "*I KNOW their sorrows!*"

He may *seem* at times thus to forget and forsake us;—leaving us to utter the plaintive cry, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious," when all the while He is bending over us in tenderest love. He often suffers our needs to attain their extremity—that He may stretch forth His succoring hand, and reveal the plenitude of His Grace! "*Ye have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.*" (James v. 11).

And "*knowing*" our sorrows, is a blessed guarantee that none will be sent but what He sees to be needful. "I will not," says He, "make a full end of thee, but *I will correct thee IN MEASURE*" (Jer. xxx. 11.) All He sends is precisely meted out—wisely apportioned. There is nothing accidental or fortuitous:—no redundant thorn—no superfluous pang. He "*putteth our tears into His bottle*" (Ps. lvi. 8.) Each one is *counted*—drop by

drop—tear by tear;—they are sacred things among the treasures of God!

Suffering believer, the iron may have entered deeply into thy soul; yet rejoice! Great is thine honor—thou art partaker with Christ in His sufferings.” Look upwards to this bright Bow encircling thy dark sky! JESUS, a sorrowing, sympathizing Jesus, “knows” thine aching pangs and burning tears, and He will “*come down to deliver thee!*”

“AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD.”

## Seventh Day.

### A GRACIOUS CONDITION:

“If need be.”—1 PET. i. 6.

WHAT a blessed motto and superscription over the dark lintels of sorrow!—“IF NEED BE!” Every arrow from the quiver of God is feathered with it! Write it, Child of affliction, over every trial thy God sees meet to send! If he calls thee down from the sunny mountain-heights to the darksome glades, hear Him saying, “*There is a need be.*” If he have dashed the cup of earthly prosperity from thy lips, curtailed thy creature comforts, diminished thy “basket and thy store,” hear Him saying, “*There is a need be.*” If He has ploughed and furrowed thy soul with severe bereavement—extinguished light after light in thy dwelling—hear Him thus stilling the tumult of thy grief—“*There is a need be.*”

Yes! believe it, there is some profound *reason* for thy trial, which at present may be undiscernible. No furnace will be hotter than He sees to be needed. Sometimes, indeed, His teachings are mysterious. We can with difficulty spell out the letters, *God is love!*—we can see no “bright light”—no luminous Bow in “our Cloud.” It is all mystery; not one break is there in the sky! Nay! “Hear what God the Lord doth speak”—“*If need be.*” He does not long leave His people alone, if He sees the chariot-wheels dragging heavily. He will take His own means to sever them from an absorbing love of the world—to pursue them out of self—and dislodge usurping clay-idols that may have vaulted on the throne which He alone may occupy. Before thy present trial He may have seen thy love waxing cold—thy influence for good lessening. As the sun puts out the fire, the sun of earthly prosperity may have been extinguishing the fires of thy soul—thou mayest have been shining less brightly for Christ—effecting some guilty compromise

with an insinuating and seductive world. He has appointed the very discipline and dealing needful;—nothing *else*—nothing *less* could have done!

Be still, and know that He is God! That “*need be*,” remember, is in the hands of Infinite *Love*, Infinite *Wisdom*, Infinite *Power*. Trust Him in *little* things as well as in *great* things—in trifles as well as in emergencies. Seek to have an unquestioning faith. Though other paths, doubtless, would have been selected by thee had the choice been in thy hands, be it thine to listen to His voice at every turn of the road, saying, *THIS is the way, walk ye in it.*”

We may not be able to understand it now—but one day we shall come to find, that AFFLICTION is one of God’s most blessed angels;—a ministering spirit, “sent forth to minister to them who are heirs of salvation.” There would be no *Bow* in the material heaven but for the *Cloud*! Lovelier, indeed, to the eye, is the azure blue—the fleecy summer vapors—or the gold and vermillion of western sun-

sets. But what would become of the earth if no dark clouds from time to time hung over it; distilling their treasures—reviving and refreshing its drooping vegetable tribes?

Is it otherwise with the soul? Nay. The cloud of sorrow is *needed*. Its every rain-drop has an inner meaning of LOVE! If, even now, afflicted one, these clouds are gathering, and the tempest sighing, lift up thine eye to the divine scroll gleaming in the darkened heavens, and remember that He who has put the Bow of promise there, saw also a “*need be*” for the cloud on which it rests!

“AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
‘THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD.’”

## Eighty Day.

### PRESENCE AND REST.

“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”—  
Exod. xxxiii. 14.

MOSES asked to be shewn “the way.” Here is the answer:—The way is *not* shewn—but better than this, God says, “Trust Me”—“I will go with thee!”

Afflicted one! hear the voice addressing thee from the cloudy pillar. It is a wilderness promise which “the God of Jeshurun” speaks to his spiritual Israel still. He who led his people of old “like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron,” will manifest towards thee the same Shepherd-love. The way may be very different from what we could have wished;—what we *would* have chosen. But the choice is in better hands. He has his own wise and righteous ends in every devious turning in it.



Who can look back on the past leadings of God without gratitude and thankfulness? When His sheep have been conducted to the rougher parts of the wilderness, He, their Shepherd, has "gone before them." When their fleeces were worn, and they foot-sore and weary, He has borne them in His arms. His presence has lightened every cross and sweetened every care. Let us trust Him for an unknown and chequered future. Other companionships we cherished may have failed us, but ONE who is better than the best, goes before us in His gracious Pillar-cloud. With *Him* for our portion, take what He will away, we must be happy; we can rise above the loss of the earthly gift, in the consciousness of the nobler possession and heritage we enjoy in the Great Bestower. He may have seen meet to level clay idols, that He, the All-Satisfying, might reign paramount and supreme. He may have seen meet to take earthly "presences" away, to give us more of His own, and to lead us to breathe more earnestly the prayer. "If THY presence go not

with us, carry us not hence." He will not suffer us to rear tabernacles on earth, and to write upon them, "*This is my rest.*" No! *Tenting time here—resting time yonder!* But "Fear not," He seems to say, "thou art not left unbefriended or unsolaced on the way Pilgrim in a pilgrim land! 'my presence shall go with thee.' In all thy dark and cloudy days—in thy hours of faintness and depression—in sadness and in sorrow—in loneliness and solitude—in life and in death! And when the journey is ended, the Pillar needed no more, —'*I will give thee REST.*'" The earnest of *Grace* will be followed with the fruition of **GLORY!**

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD."

## Ninth Day.

### THE GIVER AND TAKER.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."—JOB i. 21.

NOBLE posture this; to kneel and to adore!  
To see no hand but ONE! Sabians—Fire—  
Whirlwind—Sword—are all overlooked. The  
Patriarch recognizes alone "THE LORD" who  
*gave* and "THE LORD" who had *taken*!

What is the cause of so much depression,  
overmuch sorrow, ungospel murmuring in our  
hours of trial? It is what Rutherford calls  
"Our looking to the confused rollings of the  
wheels of second causes;" a refusal to rise to  
"the height of the great argument," and con-  
fidingly to say, "*The will of THE LORD be  
done!*"—a refusal to hear His voice—His own  
loving voice, mingling with the accents of  
the rudest storm—"IT IS I!"

*"Is there evil in a city, and THE LORD hath not done it?"* Is there a bitter drop in the cup, and THE LORD hath not mingled it? He loves His people too well to intrust their interests to any other. We are but clay in the hand of the Potter—vessels in the hand of the Refiner of silver. He metes out our portion. He appoints the bounds of our habitation. *"The Lord God prepared the GOURD."* *"The Lord God prepared the WORM."* He is the Author alike of mercies and sorrows, of comforts and crosses. He breathes into our nostrils the breath of life; and it is at his summons the spirit returns *"to the God who gave it!"*

Oh, that we would seek ever to regard our own lives and the lives of those dear to us as a *loan*. God, as the Great Proprietor—who, when He sees meet, can revoke the grant or curtail the lease—"HE GAVE!" All the mercies we have are *lent* mercies;—by Him bestowed;—by Him continued;—by Him withheld.

And how often *does* He take away, that He

may *Himself* enter the *vacuum* of the heart and fill it with His own ineffable presence and love! No loss can compensate for the want of *Him*, but *He* can compensate for all losses. Let us trust His love and faithfulness as a *taking* as well as a *giving* God. Often are Sense and Sight tempted to say, "Not so, Lord!" But Faith, resting on the promise, can exult in this Bow spanning the darkest cloud—  
"Even so, Father, FOR SO IT SEEMS GOOD IN THY SIGHT!"

•

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD."

✓

9

## Tenth Day.

### DELIVERANCE IN TROUBLE.

“*Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*”—Ps. l. 15.

How varied are our days of trouble! *Sickness*, with its hours of restlessness and langour. *Bereavement*, with its rifled treasures and aching hearts. *Loss of substance*—the curtailment or forfeiture of worldly possessions—riches taking to themselves wings and fleeing away; or, severer than all, the woundings of friends—abused confidence—withered affections—hopes scattered like the leaves of autumn!

But “GOD is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Tried one! He leaves not thy defenceless head unsheltered in the storm—“*Call upon ME!*” He invites thee into the pavilion of His own presence! Better the bitter *Marah* waters with His healing,

than the purest fountain of the world and *no God!* Better the hottest furnace flames with one there "like the Son of God," than that the dross should be suffered to accumulate, and the soul left to cleave to the dust! He, "the Purifier of silver," is seated by these flames tempering their fury: "Yea, he gives the special promise, *"I will deliver thee."* It may not be the deliverance we expect; the deliverance we have prayed for; the deliverance we could have wished. But shall not the sorest trial be well worth enduring, if this be the result of his chastening love—" *Thou shalt glorify me.*" "*Glorify HIM!*" How? By a simple unreasoning faith—by meek, lowly, uncomplaining acquiescence in His dealings;—these dealings endearing the Saviour and His grace more than ever to our hearts.

The Day of trouble led His saints in all ages thus to glorify Him. *David* never could have written his touching Psalms, nor *Paul* his precious Epistles, had not God cast them both into the crucible. To be the teachers of the Church of the future, they had to graduate

in the school of affliction. If He be appointing us similar discipline, let it be our endeavor to glorify Him by active obedience, as well as by passive resignation; not abandoning ourselves to selfish, moody, sentimental grief; but rather going forth on our great mission—our work and warfare—with a vaster estimate of the value of time, and the grandeur of existence.

“Give glory to the Lord your God before He cause darkness; and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains; and, while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness!”

“AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD.”



## Eleventh Day.

### PITYING LOVE.

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.”—Ps. ciii. 13.

“ABBA, FATHER!” is a Gospel word. A father bending over the sick bed of his weak or dying child; a mother pressing, in tender solicitude, an infant sufferer to her bosom. These are the earthly pictures of GOD. “*Like as a father pitieth.*” “*As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you!*”

When tempted in our season of overwhelming sorrow to say, “Never has there been so dark a cloud, never a heart so stript and desolate as mine,” let this thought hush every murmur, “*It is your FATHER’S good pleasure!*” The love and pity of the tenderest earthly parent is but a dim shadow compared to the pitying love of God. If your heavenly

Father's smile has for the moment been exchanged for the chastening rod; be assured there is some deep necessity for the altered discipline. If there be unutterable yearnings in the soul of the earthly parent as the lancet is applied to the body of his child—ininitely more is it so with your covenant God as He subjects you to these deep woundings of heart! Finite wisdom has no place in His ordinations. An earthly father *may* err—is ever erring; but, "*as for God His way is perfect.*" This is the explanation of His every dealing—"Your heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of all these things!"

Trust Him when you can not trace Him. Do not try to penetrate the cloud which He "brings over the earth," and to look *through* it. Keep your eye steadily fixed on the Bow. The mystery is God's, the promise is yours. Seek that the end of all His dispensations may be to make you more confiding. Without one misgiving commit your way to Him. He says regarding each child of His covenant family, what He said of Ephraim of old (and

never more so than in a season of suffering).  
“*I do earnestly remember him still.*” Whilst  
now bending your head like a bulrush—your  
heart breaking with sorrow—remember His  
pitying eye is upon you. Be it yours, even  
through blinding tears, to say, “*Even so,*  
FATHER!”

“AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD.”

## Twelfth Day.

### THE BLESSED HOPE.

“That blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”—TITUS ii. 13.

WHAT a bright Bow for a storm-wreathed sky! HOPE is a joyous emotion! Poetry sings of it; Music warbles its lofty aspirations; but alas! how often does it weave fantastic visions—give birth to shadowy dreams, which appear, and then vanish! “In the morning” the flowers of life are flourishing and growing up;—“In the evening” a mysterious blight comes—they lie withered garlands at our feet! The longing aspirations of a whole lifetime seem realized;—one wave of calamity overtakes us, and washes all away!

BUT, there is *one* “Blessed Hope” beyond the possibility of blight or decay—“The hope

of the glory of God," the hope "which maketh not ashamed"—"the glorious appearing of the Great God our Saviour!"

If we long on earth for the return of an absent friend or brother, separated from us for a season, by intervening oceans or continents;—if we count the weeks or months till we can welcome him back again to the parental home, how should the Christian long for the return of the "*Brother of brothers*," the Friend of friends? "I *will* come again," is His own gracious promise, "to receive you unto myself!"

Oh happy day! when He shall be "glorified in His saints;"—when His people will suffer no more, and sin no more. No more couches of sickness, or aching heads—or fevered brows; no more opened graves, or bitter tears;—and, better than all, no more guilty estrangements and traitor unholy hearts! It will be the bridal day of the soul. The body slumbering in the dust will be reunited a glorified body to the redeemed spirit. The grave shall be forever spoiled—death swal-

lowed up in eternal victory. "So shall we ever be with the Lord!"

Reader, dost thou "love His appearing?" Art thou in the eager expectant attitude of those who are "*looking for, and, hasting unto the coming of the day of God?*" "Yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come!" If thou art a child of the covenant, having conscious filial nearness to the Throne of *grace*, thou needest not dread the Throne of *glory*! True, He is the "great God," but He is "*our Saviour.*" It is a "Kinsman Redeemer" who is ordained "to judge the world in righteousness." Yes! turn thine eye oft-times towards this bright Bow spanning a glorious future—for remember, it is "to them who LOOK for Him," that He shall "appear the second time without sin unto salvation!"

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD."

## Thirteenth Day.

### A GRACIOUS REMOVAL.

“The righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace! They shall rest in their beds.”—ISA. lvii. 1, 2.

How this thought reconciles to earth's saddest separations! The early (what we are apt to think the *too* early) graves of our “loved and lost,” have saved them much sorrow, much suffering, much *sin*! Who can tell what may have been brooding in a dark horizon? The fairest vessel—the life freighted with greatest promise—might have made shipwreck on this world's treacherous sea. My God knows what was best. If He plucked His lily soon, it was to save it some rough blast. If He early folded His lamb, it was to save it having its fleece soiled with earthly corruption.

If the port of glory was soon entered, it was because He foresaw threatening tempests that screened from our limited vision—"So He brought them to the haven where they would be!"

Yes! *the quiet haven!* The storms of life are over! That shore is undisturbed by one murmuring wave. "He shall enter" (he *has* entered) "into *peace!*" the rest which "*remaineth!*" Did the ransomed dead, at the hour of their departure, sink into blank oblivion—inherit everlasting silence, sad indeed would be the pang of separation. But, "Weep not, she is not dead, but *sleepeth.*" Yea! weep not! She is not dead, but *liveth!* At the very moment earth's tears are falling, the spirit is sunning in the realms of everlasting day, safely housed, safely *Home!* The body "*rests in its bed.*" The grave is its couch of repose! We bid it the long "good night" in the joyful expectancy of a glorious re-union at the waking-time of immortality—that "morning without clouds," whose "sun shall no more go down!"



Child of sorrow! mourning over the withdrawal of some beloved object of earthly affection. Dry thy tears. An early death has been an early crown! The tie sundered here links thee to the throne of God. Thou hast a brother, a sister, a child, in Heaven! Thou art the relative of a ransomed saint! We are proud when we hear of our friends being "*advanced*" in this world. What are the world's noblest promotions in comparison with that of the believer at death, when he graduates from grace to glory? when he exchanges the pilgrim warfare for the eternal rest?

Often, in thine hours of sadness, contrast the *certainty* of *present* bliss, with the *possibilities* of a suffering, sorrowing, sinning *future*—the joys in possession, with the evils which *might* have been in reversion. Thou mayest now, like the Shunammite of old, be gazing with tearful eye on some withered blossom, but when the question is put, "*Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child?*" in the elevating confidence that they have "*entered into peace,*" and are "*resting*"

in their beds," be it thine joyfully to answer,  
" *It is well!*"

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD."

## Fourteenth Day.

### UNVEILED MYSTERIES.

“What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.”—JOHN xiii. 7.

MUCH is baffling and perplexing to us in God's present dealings. “What!” we are often ready to exclaim, “could not the cup have been less bitter—the trial less severe—the road less rough and dreary?” “Hush thy misgivings,” says a gracious God; “arraign not the rectitude of my dispensations. Thou shalt yet see all revealed and made bright in the mirror of eternity!”

“*What I do!*”—it is all *My* doing—*My* appointment. *Thou* hast but a partial view of these dealings—they are seen by the eye of sense through a dim and distorted medium. *Thou* canst see nought but plans crossed, and gourds laid low, and ‘beautiful rods’ broken.

*But I* see the end from the beginning. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

And "*Thou SHALT know!*" Wait for the "hereafter" revelation! An earthly father puzzles not the ear of infancy with hard sayings and involved problems. He waits for the manhood of being, and then unfolds all. So it is with God! We are now in our nonage;—children lisping in earthly infancy a knowledge of His ways. We shall learn "the deep things of God" in the manhood of eternity! Christ now often shews Himself only "behind the lattice,"—a glimpse and He is gone! But the day is coming when we shall "see Him as He is!"—when every dark hieroglyphic in the Roll of Providence will be interpreted and expounded!

It is unfair to criticise the half-finished picture—to censure or condemn the half-developed plan. God's plans are here in embryo. "We see," says Rutherford," but broken links of the chains of His Providence. Let the former work His own clay in what frame He pleaseth." But a flood of light will break

upon us from the Sapphire Throne— In *Thy* light, O God! we shall see light." The "need be," muffled as a secret now, will be confided to us *then*, and become luminous with love.

Perhaps we may not even have to wait till Eternity for the realisation of this promise. We may experience its fulfilment here. We not unfrequently find, even in this present world, mysterious dispensations issuing in unlooked-for blessing. *Jacob* would never have seen *Joseph* had he not parted with *Benjamin*. Often would the believer never have seen *the true JOSEPH* had he not been called on to part with his best Beloved! His language at the time is that of the Patriarch—"I am indeed bereaved!" "*All these things are against me!*" But the things which he imagined to be so adverse, have proved the means of leading him to see the heavenly King "in his beauty" before he dies. Much is sent to "humble us and to prove us." It may not do us good *now*, but it is promised to do so "*at the latter end.*"

I shall not dictate to my God what His

ways *should* be. The patient does not dictate to his Physician. He does not reject and refuse the prescription because it is nauseous; —He knows it is for his good, and takes it on trust. It is for faith to repose in whatever God appoints. Let me not wrong His love or dishonor His faithfulness by supposing that there is one needless or redundant drop in the cup which His loving wisdom has mingled. “*Now we know in part, but THEN shall we know even as also we are known!*”

“AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, **THAT**  
**THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD.**”

## Fifteenth Day.

### THE CHOOSING PLACE.

I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."

—ISA. xlviii. 10

THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION ! It is God's meeting-place with His people. "I have chosen thee," says He, there ; I will keep thee there, till the purifying process is complete ; and, if need be, in a "chariot of FIRE" I will carry thee to heaven ! Some Fires are for destruction, but this is for purification. He, the *Refiner*, is sitting by the furnace regulating the flames, tempering the heat ; not the least filing of the gold but what is precious to Him ! The bush is burning with *fire*, but He is in the midst of it ;—a living God in the bush—a living Saviour in the furnace !

And has not this been the method of His dealing with His faithful people in every age.

*First*, trial ; *then*, blessings. First, straits ; then, deliverances : Egypt—plagues—darkness—brickkilns—the Red Sea—forty years of desert privations—**THEN Canaan !** First, the burning fiery furnace ; *then*, the vision of “one like the Son of God !” Or, as with Elijah on Carmel, the answer is first by *fire*, and *then* by *rain*. First, the fiery trial, then the gentle descent of the Spirit’s influences, coming down “like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth.”

Believer ! be it yours to ask, Are my trials sanctified ? Are they making me holier, purer, better ; more meek, more gentle, more heavenly-minded, more Saviour-like ? Seek to “*glorify God in the fires.*” Patience is a grace which the Angels can not manifest. It is a flower of earth,—it blooms not in Paradise ; it requires *tribulation* for its exercise ; it is nurtured only amid wind, and hail, and storm. By patient, uncomplaining submission, remember, you, a poor sinner, can thus magnify your God in a way the loftiest angelic natures can not do ! He is taking you to the inner chambers



of His covenant faithfulness. His design is to purge away your dross, to bring you forth from the furnace reflecting his own image, and fitted for glory! Those intended for great usefulness are much in the fining-pot. "His children," says Romaine, "have found suffering times happy times. They never have such nearness to their Father, such holy freedom with Him, and such Heavenly refreshment with Him, as under the cross!

"Beloved! think it not strange concerning the *fiery* trial which is to try you, . . . . but rejoice!"

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD."

5\*

## Sixteenth Day.

### MOURNING ENDED.

“The days of thy mourning shall be ended.”—ISA. lx. 20.

THE believer has “mourning days.” The place of his sojourn is a *valley of tears*. Adam went weeping from *his* paradise, we go weeping on the way to ours. But, pilgrim of grief! thy tears are numbered. A few more aching sighs—a few more gloomy clouds—and the eternal sun shall burst on thee, whose radiance shall never more be obscured! Life may be to thee one long “Valley of Baca”—a protracted scene of “weeping!”—but soon shalt thou hear the sweet chimes wafted from the towers of the new Jerusalem, “Enter into the joy of thy Lord!” “*The Lord God shall wipe away all tears from off all faces!*”

“*The DAYS of thy mourning!*” It is a consoling thought that all these days are appoint-

ed—meted out—numbered. “Unto you it is GIVEN,” says the apostle, “to *suffer!*” Yes! and if thou art a child of the covenant, thy mourning days are days of special privilege, intended to be fraught with blessing. To the unbeliever, they are earnest of everlasting woe;—to the believer, they are preludes and precursors of eternal glory! Affliction to the one is the cloud without the Bow,—to the other, it is the cloud radiant and lustrous with gospel promise and gospel hope!

Reader! art thou now one of the many members of the family of sorrow? Be comforted! Soon the long night-watch will be over—pain, sickness, weakness, weariness. Soon the windows of the soul will be no more darkened. Soon thou shalt have nothing to be delivered from,—thy present losses and crosses will turn into eternal gains,—the dews of the night of weeping, (nature’s tear-drops) will come to sparkle like beauteous gems in the morning of immortality! Soon the Master’s footsteps will be heard, saying, “The days of thy mourning are ended,” and thou

shalt take off thy sackcloth, and be girded with gladness.

Up to that moment, thy life may have been one long "day" of mourning! but once past the golden portals, and the eye can be dim no more;—the very fountain of weeping will be dried! The period of your *mourning* is counted by "DAYS;"—of your eternal *rejoicing* by *eras and cycles*! "Why art thou then cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God!" I will gaze through my tears on this celestial rainbow, and sing this "song in the night," which the God, who is to wipe my tears away, has put into my lips: "*And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more tears, for the former things are passed away!*"

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD "

## Seventeenth Day.

### THE ABIDING FRIEND.

“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”—HEB. xiii. 5.

No human friend can say so. The closest and dearest of earthly links may be broken, yea! *have* been broken. Distance may part—time estrange—the grave sunder. Loving earthly looks may only greet thee now in mute smiles from the portrait on the wall. But here is an unfainting, unvarying, unfailing Friend. Sorrowing one! amid the wreck of earthly joys which thou mayest be even now bewailing, here is a message sent unto thee from thy God—“*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee!*” Thy gourd has withered, but He who gave it thee remains! Surrender thyself to his disposal. He wishes to shew thee His present sufficiency for thy happiness. As ofttimes thy heart in silence and sadness weaves its plaintive lament, “Joseph

is not, and Simeon is not!" think of Him who hath promised to set "the solitary in families" (Ps. lxxviii. 6), and to "give unto them a name and a place better than of sons or of daughters!" Alone! thou art *not* alone! Turn in self-oblivion to Jesus. It is not, it can not be "night," if He, "the Sun of thy soul," be ever near! In the morning, He comes with the earliest beam that visits thy chamber. When the curtains of night close around thee, He, to whom "the darkness and the light are both alike," is at thy side!—In the stillness of night, when in thy wakeful moments, the visions of the departed flit before thee like shadows on the wall,—He, the unslumbering Shepherd of Israel, is tending thy couch, and whispering in thine ear, "Fear not, for *I* am with thee!"

Thy experience may be that of Paul, "All forsook me!" But, like him, also, thou wilt, doubtless, be able to add in the extremity of thy sorrow, "*Nevertheless*, THE LORD stood with me, and strengthened me!" (2 Tim. iv. 16, 17). He can compensate, by His own loving

presence, for every earthly loss. Without the consciousness of His friendship and love, the smallest trial will crush thee. With Him *in* thy trial, supporting and sustaining thee under it, (yea, coming in the place of those thou mournest), thou wilt have an infinite and inexhaustible portion for a finite and mutable one. Many a cloud is there *without* a Bow in *Nature*—but never in *Grace*. Every Sorrow has its corresponding and counterpart Comfort—“*In the multitude of the SORROWS that I had in my heart, Thy COMFORTS have refreshed my soul*” (Ps. xciv. 19). If in the midnight of thy grief thy earthly sun appear to have set for ever, an inner, but not less real sunshine, lights up thy stricken heart. The stream of life may have been poisoned at its source, but blessed be His name if it have driven thee to say, “All my springs are IN THEE!” “The LORD is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him!”

“AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD.”

## Eighteenth Day.

### UNWILLING DISCIPLINE.

“He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” —LAM. iii. 33.

IN our seasons of trial, when under some inscrutable dispensation, how apt is the murmuring thought to rise in our hearts—“*All things are against me!*” Might not this overwhelming blow have been spared? Might not this dark cloud, which has shadowed my heart and my home with sadness, have been averted? Might not the accompaniments of my trial have been less severe—“*Surely the Lord hath forgotten to be gracious?*”

Nay, these afflictions are errands of mercy in disguise! —“*He afflicteth not willingly.*” There is nothing capricious or arbitrary about thy God’s dealings. Unutterable *tenderness* is the character of all His allotments! The



world may wound by unkindness;—trusted friends may become treacherous;—a brother may speak with unnecessary harshness and severity; but the Lord is “*abundant* in goodness and in truth.” He appoints no needless pang When he *appears* like Joseph to “speak *roughly*,” there are gentle undertones of love. The stern accents are assumed, because He has precious lessons that could not otherwise have been taught!

Ah! be assured there is some deep *necessity* in all He does. In our calendars of sorrow we may put this luminous mark against every trying hour, “*It was needed!*” Some redundant branch in the tree required pruning. Some wheat required to be cast overboard to lighten the ship and avert further disaster Mourning one!—He might have dealt far otherwise with thee! He might have cut thee down as a fruitless, worthless cumberer! He might have abandoned thee to drift, disowned and unpiloted on the rocks of destruction;—joined to thine idols, He might have left thee “alone” to settle on thy lees, and forfeit thine

eternal bliss ! But He loved thee better. It was kindness, infinite kindness, which blighted thy fairest blossoms, and hedged up thy way with thorns. "Without this hedge of thorns," says Richard Baxter, "on the right hand and on the left, we should hardly be able to keep the way to heaven."

We, in our blind unbelief, may speak of trials we imagine might have been spared—chastisements that are unnecessarily severe. But the day is coming when every step of the Lord's procedure will be vindicated; when we shall own and recognize each separate experience of sorrow to have been an unspeakably precious and important period in the history of the soul. Yes!—child of God. The messenger of affliction has an olive-branch in one hand—a love-token plucked from the bowers of paradise—and in the other, a chalice mingled by One too loving and gracious to insert one needless ingredient of sorrow ! Remember, every drop of wrath in that cup was exhausted by a surety-Saviour. In taking it into thy hand, be it thine to extract support;

and consolation from what so mightily sustained a Greater Sufferer in a more awful hour:—*“This cup which THOU givest me to drink, shall I not drink it?”*

“AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD.”

## Nineteenth Day.

### DEATH VANQUISHED.

‘I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.’—REV. i. 18.

AN enthroned Saviour speaks! “*I*,” says He, “am he that liveth!” (or, “*the Living one.*”) Others have passed away; but I ever live, and ever love! I am *now* living!—a personal Saviour—“Christ thy *life*!” Art thou stooping over some treasured house of clay which the whirlwind has made a mass of ruins? I roused the whirlwind from its chamber. I appointed the startling dispensation. I ordered the shroud, and prepared the grave! Let not ‘accident,’ ‘chance,’ ‘fate,’ enter into the vocabulary of thy sorrow. I am the Lord of *death* as well as of *life*. I have the keys of “Hades and of the grave” suspended at my girdle. The tomb is never unlocked but by

Me. Let others talk of the might of the King of Terrors. He has *no* might but by my permission.

More than this,—mourning one! I *was* DEAD." I myself once entered that gloomy portico! I sanctified and consecrated it by my presence!—I was a tenant of the tomb. This now glorified Body was once laid by human hands in a borrowed Grave! Canst thou dread to walk the Valley trodden by thy Lord?—to encounter the "last enemy," which He fought and conquered. *Death!*—it has been converted by Him into a "parenthesis in endless life."

"*I am He that was DEAD*"—"I am *He that LIVETH*." What more could the Christian desire than this twofold assurance? On the Day of Atonement of old, the blood was sprinkled alike on the floor and on the mercy-seat;—the voice of blood arose from the floor below, and the mercy-seat above. So it is with the voice of our Elder Brother's blood. It cried first from earth beneath, and now from Heaven. His *dying* love, is now ever-

*living*,—imperishable and immutable as His own being!

As the Bow in the material firmament can never cease to appear, so long as the present laws of nature continue, and there is a sun in the heavens; so the Bow of the Everlasting Covenant, and all its blessings, can only fail when Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, ceases to shine, and ceases to be! With such a Bow over-arching the future,—one limb resting amid the cloudlands of life, the other melting its hues into the deeper shadows of the Valley of Death, “*I will fear no evil, for Thou,*” O SAVIOUR GOD, “*art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*”

“AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD.”

## Twentieth Day.

### THE GREATEST GIFT.

“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all—how shall He not with him also freely give us all things.”—Rom. viii. 32.

THESE are amazing words! God—the Infinite God—identifying Himself (so to speak) with the experiences of human sorrow ;—silencing every murmur with the unanswerable argument—‘*I spared not my own Son.*’ I gave my Greatest gift for *thee* ;—wilt thou not cheerfully surrender thy best to Me? Canst thou refuse after *this* unspeakable gift of My love, to trust Me in lesser things? The Greater gift may surely well be a pledge for the bestowment of all needed subordinate good!

He promises to give “*all things* ;”—these “all things” are in *His* hand. They will be

selected and allotted by His loving wisdom; crosses as well as comforts—sorrows and tears, as well as smiles and joys. Mourning one, this very trial which now dims thine eye is one of these “all things.” Trust His faithfulness. He would as soon wound the Son of His love as wound *thee*!

“*How shall He not give?*” There is a “blessed impossibility,” after the bestowment of *the Gift of Gifts*, that He will inflict one unnecessary trial, or withhold one needed boon. Think of His love when He offered His Isaac on the altar. It is the same at this hour—Infinite—Immutable. Yes! We may well be reconciled, even to the denial of earthly blessedness, because ordered by Him who gave *Jesus*! Lying meekly in the arms of His mercy, be it ours to say in filial confidence—“Lord, anything with Thy love—anything *but* Thy frown!”

“*All things.*”—The *whole* range of human wants and necessities is known to Him. The care He invites me to cast upon Him is “*all my care*”—the need “*all my need*!” This is



His own special promise—"And God is able to make *all* grace abound toward you; that ye, always having *all sufficiency* in *all things*, may abound to every good work." (2 Cor. ix. 8). He will give me nothing and deny me nothing, but what is for my good. Let me not question the appointments of infinite wisdom. Let me not wound Him by one dishonoring doubt. Let me lean upon Him in little things as well as in great things. After the pledge of His love in *Jesus*, nothing can come wrong that comes from His hands! If tempted at times to harbor some unkind misgivings, let the sight of the cross dispel it. Looking to the Bow in the cloud gleaming with the words—" *He loved me, and gave Himself for me!*" be it mine to say—

Lord, though thou bend my spirit low,  
Love only will I see;  
The very hand that strikes the blow,  
Was wounded once for me.

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD."

## Twenty-first Day.

### SLEEPING AND WAKING.

“Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”  
—1 THESS. iv. 14.

OR, as these words have been rendered—  
“Them also which are *laid asleep in Jesus.*”

We bid an earthly friend “Good night” in the pleasing expectation of meeting next morning. The saints are “laid asleep” in the grave of Jesus, in the sure and certain hope of meeting Him in the morning of immortality !

Child of God ! weep not for those who have “departed to be with Christ.” It is with them “far better.” Think not of them as “*gone.*” That is a word taken from the vocabulary of death, and which, it is to be feared, is often employed with many in the heathen sense of *annihilation*. Seek not “the

living among the dead." Think rather that the last sigh was scarce over on earth, when the song was begun in Heaven. The Spirit winged its arrowy flight among ministering seraphim. Hear that voice stealing down in the soft whisper of Heaven's music, and saying—" *If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto my Father !*"

The body, the casket of this immortal jewel, is left for a season to the dishonors of the tomb. But it is only for a brief "night-watch." That dust is precious, because redeemed. Body as well as soul was purchased by the life-blood of Immanuel. Angels guard these slumbering ashes;—and the day is coming when God shall "send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other." Oh, if there be "joy among the angels of God over *one* sinner that *repenteth*,"—what shall be the joy of those Blessed Beings over the myriads of rising dead, hastening at their summons to their crowns and thrones !

Christian mourner! "Thy brother shall rise again." Wish him not back amid the storms of the wilderness. Be thankful rather that the wheat is no longer out in the tempest and rain; but safely garnered, eternally housed. Thou wouldst not, surely, if thou couldst, weep that blest one back from glory—ask him to unlearn Heaven's language—and be once more involved in the dust of battle? Nay, rather "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Death is not an eternal sleep. "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Jesus is now whispering in thine ear the glorious secret hid from ages and generations, and which was left to Him, as "the Abolisher of Death," to disclose: "Thy dead shall live; together with My dead body shall they arise." He is pointing thee onward to that hour of jubilee, when the summons shall be addressed to all His sleeping saints: "*Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust!*"

Oh happy day! when I shall see my Saviour God in all the glories of His exalted

Humanity; and *with* Him, the once "loved and lost," now the loved and glorified, never to be lost again! "*The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.*"—Not one shall be wanting. In concert with those whose tongues are now silent on earth, we shall then unite in the lofty anthem, sung by the ingathered Church triumphant—"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ."

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD."

## Twenty-second Day.

### INVISIBLE HARMONIES.

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”—Rom. viii. 28.

WE are apt to “limit the Holy One of Israel,” and to say, ‘*Some* things have worked together for our good.’ God says, “*All* things!” Joys, sorrows, crosses, losses, prosperity, adversity, health, sickness; the gourd bestowed, and the gourd withered; the cup full, and the cup emptied; the lingering sick-bed, the early grave!

Often, indeed, would sight and sense lead us to doubt the reality of the promise. We can see, in many things, scarce a dim reflection of love. Useful lives taken—blossoms prematurely plucked—spiritual props removed—benevolent schemes blown upon. But the apostle does not say, “WE SEE,” but “WE KNOW.”

It is the province of faith to trust God in the dark. The uninitiated and undiscerning cannot understand or explain the revolutions and dependencies of the varied wheels in a complicated machine; but they have confidence in the wisdom of the Artificer, that all is designed to "work out" some great and useful end.

Be it ours to write over every mysterious dealing, "*This also cometh from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.*" Let us "be still and know that He is God." "We have a wonderful advertisement of a Physician from the Spirit of Truth," says Lady Powerscourt, "*who healeth ALL thy diseases.*" . . . . "He requires but one thing, to take *all* He has prescribed, bitter as well as sweet!" He will yet vindicate His own rectitude and faithfulness in our trials; our own souls will be made the better for them; He himself will be glorified *in* them. "Doubt not my love," He seems to say; "the day is coming when you shall have all mysteries explained, all secrets unravelled, and this very trial demonstrated to be *one* of the 'all things'

working together for your good. 'Men see not the bright light in the clouds,' but it shall come to pass that *at EVENING TIME it shall be LIGHT!*' "

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD."



## Twenty-third Day.

### THE UNCHANGING NAME.

“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.”—HEB. xiii. 8.

ALL is changing here. Life is a kaleidic scope, made up of shifting forms:—new scenes, new tastes, new feelings, new associations;—an alternation of cloud and sunshine, tempest and calm. Its joys are like the airy bubbles on the stream, tinted with sunlight: we touch them—they are gone! We have to tell of vacant seats in our sanctuaries—vacant seats at our home-hearths—the music of well-known voices hushed. Often just when we imagine we have at last obtained a stable footing, the scaffolding gives way, the prop on which for a lifetime we had been leaning fails, and we feel ourselves out amid the pitiless storm.

But is there nothing stable amid all this mutability? — nothing secure and abiding amid these fleeting shadows? Yes! JESUS is without *any* variableness. Eighteen hundred years have rolled by since He left our world. The world has changed, but *He* is to this hour the same. We can follow Him through all His wondrous pilgrimage of love on earth. We can behold *Penitence* crouching at His feet, and sent away forgiven;—*Sorrow* tracking His footsteps with tears, and sent away with her tears dried and her wounded spirit healed;—*Pain* and *Sickness* pleading with pallid lip and wasted feature; and *Disease*, at His omnipotent mandate, taking wings to itself and fleeing away! And He who is now on the Heavenly Throne is “*that same Jesus*.” His Ascension-glories have not changed His changeless heart or alienated His affections. In Him we have a Rock which the billows of adversity can not shake. The spent fury of the chafing waves may reach us,—no more; and this only endearing the security and value of the *abiding* Refuge!

How often does God rouse the storm to drive us from all creature confidences to the only stable One! How often does He poison and pollute the stream to lead us to seek the everlasting Fountain-head! We may have lost much; but if we have found Thee, O blessed Jesus, we possess infinitely more than we have forfeited. We can glory in the persuasion that nothing can ever separate us from Thy love. Our best earthly friends, a look may alienate;—an unintentional word may estrange,—the Grave *must* sunder. But “*the LORD liveth, and blessed be my Rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted.*” What Thou hast been “yesterday”—yea, from everlasting ages—Thou art this day, and Thou *shalt* be for ever and ever! We can look to the Bow of Thy promises and behold all of them in *Thee* “*yea and amen!*” Thou art addressing us from Thy Throne in glory—that Throne spoken of in Revelation as encircled with “the rainbow of emerald” (the emblem of *perpetuity*), and saying, “Fear not, I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for

evermore!" "Because I live, ye shall live  
also!"

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THA  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD "

## Twenty-fourth Day.

### STRENGTH FOR THE DAY.

“As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”—DEUT. xxxiii. 25.

BELIEVER! hast thou not felt it so? Hast thou not found plants distilling balm, growing beside sorrow's path?—succours and supports vouchsafed, which were undreamt of till the dreaded cloud had burst, and the day of trial had come? Trouble not thyself regarding an unknown and veiled future; but cast *all* thy cares on God. “Our sandals,” says a saint now in glory, “are proof against the roughest path.” He whose name is “the God of *all* grace” is better than His word. He will be found equal to all the emergencies of His people—enough for each moment and each hour as they come. He never takes us to the bitter Marah streams, but He reveals also the hidden branch. Paul was hurled down from

the third heavens to endure the smarting of his "thorn," but he rises like a giant from his fall, exulting in the sustaining *grace* of an "all-sufficient God."

The beautiful peculiarity in this promise is, that God proportions His grace to the nature and the season of trial. He does not forestal or advance a supply of grace, but when the needed season and exigency comes, then the appropriate strength and support are imparted. He does not send the Bow *before* the cloud, but when the cloud appears, the Bow is seen in it! He gives sustaining grace for a trying day, and dying grace for a dying day.

Reader! do not morbidly brood on the future. Live on the promise! When the morrow comes with its trials, Jesus will come *with* the morrow, and with its trials too. Present grace is enough for present necessity. Trust God for the future. We honor Him, not by anticipating trial, but by confiding in His faithfulness, and crediting His assurance, that no temptation will be sent greater than we are able to bear. Even if you should see fresh

clouds returning after the rain, be ready to say—" *I will fear no evil, for THOU art with me !*"

Insufficient you are of yourself for any trial—but "your sufficiency is of God." The promise is not "*Thy* grace," but "*My* grace is sufficient." Oh, trust His "all-sufficiency in *all things*." JEHOVAH-JIREH, "*the Lord will provide*." See written over every trying hour of the future, "*So shall thy strength be !*"

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD."

## Twenty-fifth Day.

### THE GRAVE SPOILED.

“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues: O Grave, I will be thy destruction.”—Hos. xiii. 14.

CHRISTIAN! the Grave is lighted with Immanuel's love. The darkest of all clouds—that which rests over the land of *Hades*—has the brightest Bow in it. These gloomy portals are not to hold thy loved and lost for ever. The land of forgetfulness, where thy buried treasures lie, is not a winter of unbroken darkness and desolation. A glorious spring-time of revival is promised, when the mortal shall put on immortality, and the corruptible shall be clothed with “incorruption.”

*The Resurrection of the body!* It is the climax of the work of Jesus—its culminating glory. St. Paul represents a longing Church



—as “waiting for the adoption, (to wit), *the redemption of the body.*” It was the pre-eminent theme of his preaching; “He preached unto them Jesus, *and the resurrection of the dead.*” It was the loved article in his creed, which engrossed his own holiest aspirations, “If by any means I might attain unto *the resurrection of the dead.*” It was the grand solace he administered to other mourners. It is not when speaking of the immediate bliss of the departed *spirit* at the hour of death, but it is when dwelling on “the last trump”—the dead “rising incorruptible,” and “caught up,” in their resurrection bodies, “to meet the Lord,” that he says—“*Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*”

Blessed day—the great Easter of creation! the dawn of the Sabbatic morn! the Jubilee of a triumphant Church! Christian mourner! go not to the grave to *weep* there. Every particle of that mouldering dust is redeemed by the oblation of Calvary; and the great Abolisher of death is only awaiting the ingathering of His elect, to give the commission

to His archangels regarding *all* His saints, which He gave of old regarding *one*, ‘ Loose him, and let him go !’

And who can image forth the glory of these Resurrection bodies, reunited to their glorified companion-spirits, fashioned like their Lord’s? every sense, every faculty—purified, sublimated, instinct with holiness; emulous with ardor in His service, eager to execute His will; retaining, it may be, the personal identities of earth, the old features worn in the “nether valley;” Now, reunited to death-divided friends in ties which know no dissolution—no trace of grief lingering on their countenances—no accents of sorrow trembling on their tongues! The Lamb, in the midst of the throne, “leading” them and “feeding” them; climbing along with them, steep by steep, in the path of life, and saying at each ascending step in the endless progression, “I will shew you greater things than these!”

Meanwhile He has Himself risen as the pledge of this Resurrection of all His people. The Great Sheaf has been waved before the

Throne as the Earnest of the mighty Harvest.

*"Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."*

*"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first Resurrection !"*

“AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD.”

## Twenty-Sixth Day.

### EVERLASTING LOVE.

“I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee!”—JER. xxxi. 3.

BELIEVER! art thou tempted now to doubt His love? Are His footsteps lost amid the night-shadows through which He is now conducting thee? Remember He had His eye upon thee before the birth of time; yea, from all eternity! What appears to thee now some sudden capricious exercise of His power or sovereignty, is the determination and decree of “everlasting love.” ‘I loved thee,’ He seems to say, ‘Suffering one, *into* this affliction; I will love thee *through* it; and when My designs regarding thee are completed, I will shew thee that the love which is “*from* everlasting, is *to* everlasting!’”

Child of God! If there be a ripple now

agitating the surface of the stream, trace it up to this fountain-head of *love*. God is faithful. He cannot deny Himself. He must have some wise end to subserve, if some dark clouds are now intercepting these gracious beams. "For a small moment I have forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed. but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Isa. liv. 7-10).

God sets His Bow in the dark sky; and as if it were not enough that His *people* should look upon it and take comfort in its many and varied promises,—He Himself graciously be-

comes a party in gazing on the covenant pledge;—“*And the Bow shall be in the cloud, AND I SHALL LOOK UPON IT, that I may remember the everlasting covenant!*” (Gen. ix. 16.) He puts Himself (so to speak) in mind of His own everlasting love! In His Saints’ dark and cloudy day, when they imagine that *their* eyes are alone resting on the tokens of covenant faithfulness, the eye of a covenant-keeping God is resting upon them too. ‘I will look upon my own Promises,’ He seems to say. ‘They shall be memorials to Myself of My purposes of unchanging mercy.’ Nor is this love merely a general indiscriminate affection. The motto-verse speaks of each individual member of the Covenant family—“*I have loved THEE!*” “O my Father,” says Madam Guyon, “it seems to me sometimes as if Thou didst forget every other being in order to think only of my faithless and ungrateful heart.”

Let us seek to view our trials as so many cords of loving kindness, by which our God is seeking to draw us, yea, and will draw us

nearer Himself. Who knows what mercy may be bound up in what may seem to us dark and mysterious dispensations? We are apt to misname and misinterpret His ways. *We* call His dealings severe trials. *He* calls them "loving-kindnesses."

Drooping saint! let thine eyes rest on the Rainbow over-arching the Throne of God, spanning from eternity to eternity; and read for thy comfort the gracious declaration—  
*"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him."*

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD."

## Twenty-Seventh Day.

### INVIOABLE ATTACHMENT

“There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”—  
Prov. xviii. 24.

CLOSE is the tie which binds brother to brother; the companions of infancy, sharers of one another's joys and sorrows; cast in the same human mould; having engraven on their heart of hearts the same hallowed associations of life's early morning.

But the time for separation at last comes. The birds must leave the parent's nest, and try their pinions beyond their native valley. The world's call to work and warfare is imperious. The old homestead, like a dismembered vessel, is broken to pieces; and the inmates, like that vessel's planks, strew far apart the trough of life's ocean. The world's duties sever some; unhappy estrangements,



at times, may sever others; death, at some time, *must* sever all.

*But* there is One whose friendship and love circumstances cannot estrange, distance cannot affect, and death cannot destroy. The kindest of earthly relatives may say to us regarding this true Elder Brother, as Boaz said to Ruth, "It is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I." He is brother, yea, more than brother; Friend, Counsellor, Portion, Physician, Shepherd, all combined! Happy for us, when the old avenues of comfort are closed up, to hear Him, whose faithfulness is unimpeachable, saying, "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee!" Happy for us when the old moorings give way, to have One safe Anchorage, that cannot be removed or shaken. "I shall now go to sleep," said a remarkable saint, who, driven about with storm and tempest, at last found the safe Shelter, "I shall now go to sleep on the Rock of Ages!"

Tried believer! He has never failed thee, and never will. With Him are no altered

tones, no fitful affections. The reed may be shaken, but the Rock remains immutable. He is Himself the true "*Bow in the cloud.*" The promises of Scripture, like the varied hues in the natural rainbow, are manifold. But all these promises are "IN HIM" (2 Cor. i. 20). Ay, and it is in the "cloudy day" that this Divine encircling Bow most gloriously appears. Never should we have known Christ as the "Brother, born for adversity," unless *by* adversity. It is trial that unfolds and develops His infinite worth and preciousness. When the love of earthly friends is buried in the grave, the love of the Heavenly Friend shines forth more tenderly than ever. As *Jonathan* of old, wandering faint and weary in the wood, found Honey distilling from a tree and was revived by eating it; so, faint and weary one,—wandering amid the tangled thickets—the deep glades of affliction,—seat thyself under thy "Beloved's Shadow with great delight," and let His "fruit be pleasant to thy taste!" This "TREE OF LIFE" distils a balm for every broken, wounded, bleeding

heart—every faint and down-cast spirit. Yes, JESUS will make, in this the hour of thy loneliness and sorrow, His own life-giving, life-sustaining words and promises, “*sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.*” Though now exalted on the Throne, “inhabiting the praises of eternity,” He still manifests the Brother’s heart and the Brother’s tenderness. “He is not ashamed to call us brethren.”

“AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD.”

## Twenty-eight Day.

### THE SUPPORTING PRESENCE.

“When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”—ISA. xliii. 2.

WHAT a diversity of afflictions in this trial-world! — “Waters,” “streams,” “floods,” “flames,” “fires!” The Christian is here forewarned that he will encounter these in some one of their innumerable phases; whether it be loss of health, loss of wealth, loss of friends, baffled schemes, or blighted hopes.

But, blessed thought, these trials have their limits. The *floods* will not “overflow,” the *fires* will not “burn,” the *flames* will not “consume.” God will “stay His rough wind in the day of His East wind.” He will say, “Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.”

And, better still, JESUS will be *in* all these trials, and prove sufficient *for* them all. We shall hear in the midst “of the great fight of afflictions” the sound of our Master’s footsteps. He Himself has passed through these flames, braved these floods, and bared His guiltless head to these storms. He comes to us as He did to His disciples in the very midst of the tempest, and says, “*Fear not, IT IS I, be not afraid.*”

Believer! what is your experience? Is it not that of the triumphant Israelites?—“*They went through the flood on foot; THERE did we rejoice in Him*” (Ps. lxvi. 6). “THE FLOOD!” the very scene of your trial, you were able to march boldly through it; unappalled by the threatening waves; yea, with your lips vocal with praise! How this moral heroism—this strange “rejoicing?” It was because the God of the Pillar-cloud was at your side. Your rejoicing was “in Him.” He made you “more than conqueror.” You may have many adversaries ranged against you:—“Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness,

peril, sword." But there is ONE in the midst of fires and flames and floods mightier than all; and with *Him* at your side, you can boldly utter the challenge to the heights above and the depths beneath,—“*Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?*” “Oh, Sirs!” says Thomas Brooks, “there is in a crucified Jesus something proportionable to all the straits, wants, necessities, and trials of His poor people.”

“AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD.”

## Twenty-ninth Day

### FELLOW-FEELING.

"We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities."—HEB. iv. 15.

"As the appearance," says Ezekiel, "of the Bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord!"

What an elevating truth. *The Sympathy of the God-man-Mediator* (the true Bow in the cloud)—JESUS in our sorrows! What a source of exalted joy to the stript and desolate heart!—what a green pasture to lie down upon, amid the windy storm and tempest, or in the dark and cloudy day!

The sympathy of man is cheering and comforting; but "thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." It is finite—limited—often selfish.

There are nameless and numberless sorrows on earth, beyond the reach of all human alleviation.

The sympathy of *Jesus* is alone exalted—pure—infinite—removed from all taint of selfishness. He has Himself passed through every experience of woe. There are no depths of sorrow or anguish into which I can be plunged but His everlasting arms are lower still. He has been called “The great sympathetic nerve of His Church, over which the afflictions, and oppressions, and sufferings of His people continually pass.” Child of Sorrow! a Human heart beats on the Throne! and He has *thy* name written on that heart. He cares for thee as if none other claimed His regard. As the Great High Priest, He walketh in the midst of his Temple lamps—(His golden candlesticks,)—plenishing them, at times, with oil;—trimming them, if need be, at others;—but *all* in order that they may burn with a steadier and purer lustre.

“*He was IN ALL POINTS tempted.*” Blessed assurance!—I never can know the Sorrow



into which the "Man of Sorrows" can not enter . . . Ah rather, in the midst of earth's most lacerating trials, let me listen to the unanswerable challenge from the lips of a suffering Saviour—" *Was there ever any sorrow like unto my sorrow?*" Yet He refused not to drink the cup of wrath! He shrunk not back from the appointed cross! "He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem;"—and even when He hung upon the bitter tree, He refused the Vinegar that would have assuaged the rage of thirst and mitigated physical suffering. Are we tempted at times to murmur under God's afflicting hand? "CONSIDER HIM *that endured, . . . lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.*" Shall we hesitate to bear any trial our Lord and Master sees meet to lay upon us, when we think of the infinitely weightier Cross He so meekly and unrepiningly carried for *us*?

Afflicted one! Have thine eye on this radiant Bow in thy cloud of Sorrow—thou mayest, like the disciples on the Transfiguration-mount, "*fear to enter the cloud*"—but hear

the voice issuing from it—" *This is my Beloved Son : hear HIM.*"

Jesus speaks through these clouds! He tells us *our* cares are *His* cares; *our* sorrows *His* sorrows. He has some wise and gracious end in every mysterious chastisement. His language is—" *Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it*" (Micah vi. 9). He has too kind and loving a heart to cause us one needless or superfluous pang.

Oh that we may indeed *hear* the voice out of the cloud, and seek that the trials He sends in love may be greatly sanctified. Let us not dream that Affliction of itself is a pathway to Heaven. Clouds do not form the material Rainbow. These glorious hues come from the Sunbeams alone. Without the latter, we could discern nothing but blackened heavens and dismal rain-torrents.

It is not because those clad in "white robes" had "come out of *great tribulation*" that they were enjoying the beatific Presence; but because they had "*washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*" (Rev. vii.

14). We have only reason to glory in affliction when it has been the means of bringing us nearer the Saviour, and leading us to the opened Fountain.

“Jesus! my only hope thou art,  
Strength of my failing flesh and heart;  
Oh! could I catch a smile from thee,  
And drop into Eternity!

“AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, **THAT**  
**THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD.**”

## Thirtieth Day

### A SPEEDY COMING.

“Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come and will not tarry.”—HEB. x. 37.

“A LITTLE *while*,” and the unquiet dream of life will be over, and the “morning *without clouds*” shall dawn. A few more tossings on life’s tempestuous sea, and the peaceful haven shall be entered. A few more night-watches, and the Lord of love will be seen standing on the Heavenly shore, as once He did on the shores of an earthly lake, with an eternal banquet of love prepared for His “CHILDREN.”

Yes! “HE *cometh!*” that is the Church’s “blessed hope.” It is the voice and presence of her “Beloved” which will “turn the shadow of death into the morning.” The dead—the ransomed dead—shall “hear HIS voice and come forth”—those “asleep in Jesus” God

is to bring "*with HIM.*" His final invitation is not, "Go, ye blessed, to some bright paradise of angels prepared elsewhere for you"—but "come, share My bliss—be partakers in *My* crown:"—"Enter into the joy of *THY* LORD!" Paul's heaven was described in two words—"WITH CHRIST." John's heaven is made up of the two elements—of likeness *to* Jesus, and fellowship *with* Jesus. "We shall be *like* Him," "we shall *see* Him as He is." In his sublime apocalyptic visions, when "the door was opened in heaven," the first object which attracts his arrested gaze is, "ONE who sat upon the throne;" around whom was "*a rainbow, in sight like unto an emerald*" (Rev iv. 2, 3).

Our happiness will not be complete till we are ushered into the full vision and *fruition* of Jesus. We are nourished in this far-off land from "the King's country;" but we shall not be satisfied until we see the King Himself. Jacob received full waggon-loads from Joseph, but he could not rest till he had seen him with his own eyes:—when he did so, the

aged man's spirit "revived." We receive manifold pledges of covenant mercy from the true Joseph, in this "the house of our pilgrimage;" but we long to "behold his face in righteousness." We shall only be "satisfied" when we "awake in His likeness!"

"Come! Lord Jesus, come quickly!" "*He will not tarry!*"—Each sun, as it sets, is bringing us nearer the joyful consummation. Time is hastening with gigantic footsteps, to the advent-throne. The sackcloth attire of a now burdened creation will soon be exchanged for the full robe of light and beauty which is to deck a "sabbath-world."

Happy day! when "the *Bow*," in a nobler sense, "shall be seen in the cloud"—not the Bow of *Promise*, but He in whom all the promises blend and centre—"Behold, HE cometh with CLOUDS!"

Seek ever to be in an attitude of watchfulness. Like the mother of *Sisera*, let faith be straining its ear for the murmur of the chariot-wheels;—that when the cry shall be heard—"Behold, it is He!" we may be able joyfully

to respond—“*Lo! this is our God, we have waited for Him!*”

“Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: Verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.”

“AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD.”

## Thirty-first Day.

### ETERNAL JOY.

“And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Sion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall forever flee away.”—ISA. xxxv. 10.

BELIEVER! leave thy “*Bow in the cloud*” behind thee; and with thine eye on the “Rainbow round about the throne” (Rev. iv. 3), think of the gladsome return of God’s ransomed ones to Zion—every tear-drop dried, every pang forgotten!

Once *wanderers* “in the wilderness, in a solitary way;” prisoners “bound with *affliction* and iron;” *mariners* struggling in a tempest (Ps. cvii. 4, 10, 23); mark the termination of their chequered history. God is not only represented as succoring their fainting souls, shivering in pieces their chains, and enabling them to buffet the angry surges; but He leads the pilgrims to “a city of habitation;” He rescues the captives from “darkness and the shadow



of death." He brings the storm-tossed seamen to their "desired haven," and puts the "everlasting song" into the lips of all, "*Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!*" (Ps. cvii. 7, 14, 30).

Sorrowing one! tossed on life's stormy sea, soon will that peaceful haven be thine. From the sunlit shores of glory, each and all of thy trials will be seen to be special proofs of thy Heavenly Father's faithfulness, — encircled with a halo of love! Thou mayest now be going forth "weeping," bearing thy precious seed, but thou shalt "doubtless come again with *rejoicing*, bringing thy sheaves with thee."

As some seeds require on earth to be steeped in water before they germinate, so is immortal seed oftentimes here steeped in tears. BUT "*they that sow in tears shall reap in JOY.*" Though "weeping" may endure for the night, "*joy cometh in the morning!*" "You are," says Rutherford, "upon the entry of Heaven's harvest; the losses that I write of are but summer show'ers, and the Sun of the new Je-

rusalem shall quickly dry them up." The "song of the night" shall then blend with the song of the skies, and inner, glorious meanings will be disclosed to sight, which are now hidden from the eye of faith !

*"Sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away !"*

"No sickness, no sorrow, no pain," said an aged saint now entered on these glorious realities ; "but this is only Thy negative. What, O God ! must be Thy positive?" "*Songs,*" "*everlasting joy,*" "*joy and gladness.*" It will be song upon song, joy upon joy, gladness upon gladness ! These songs of Heaven will be "*songs of degrees.*" The ransomed will be ever graduating in bliss, mounting "from glory to glory," each song suggesting the keynote of a louder and loftier.

Reader ! art thou mourning the loss of those who "are not ;" the music of whose voices is hushed for the for-ever of time, and who have left thee to travel companionless and alone the wilderness journey ? A few more fears, a few more *tears*, and thou shalt meet them in

the day-break of glory! Nay, more; they have but anticipated thee in an earlier crown. If they have left thee behind for a little season to continue thy night-song; think with bounding heart of that eternal day, when, looking back on the clouds floating in the far distance in the nether Valley, thou shalt be able to join in the anthem said to be sung by the four-and-twenty elders as they gaze on the throne encircled by the "RAINBOW OF EMERALD;" for "*they rest not day and night, saying, HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY!*" (Rev. iv. 3, 8).

"Lord of our souls! Thou Saviour ever dear,  
Be still our RAINBOW in the clouds of life;  
In Thy pure sunlight melt each rising tear,—  
Our Arc of Triumph in the scenes of strife.

"Radiant with mercy, calm the sinking heart,  
And beam through sorrow's night and suff'ring's gloom,  
A deathless Iris that will not depart,  
But shine with hues unfading o'er the tomb!"

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS,  
WHEN I BRING A CLOUD OVER THE EARTH, THAT  
THE BOW SHALL BE SEEN IN THE CLOUD  
AND I WILL LOOK UPON IT,  
THAT  
I MAY REMEMBER  
THE EVERLASTING COVENANT"

“And

there was a

Rainbow

round about the Throne,

in sight like unto

an

Emerald.”

REV. IV. 3.

## THE

# FIRST BEREAVEMENT.

---

THIS is a solemn hour on which you have entered. The shadows of death for the first time are falling around your dwelling. Often before have you heard of trial. You may have visited over and over again the house of affliction. You may even have dealt out lessons of comfort to others. The doors of neighbors and friends you have seen darkened with bereavement, but the King of Terrors has till now passed you by. Your turn has at last come!—the spoiler has broken into your fond circle. The gourd is withered, the “beautiful rod” has been broken. Your heart is smitten like grass. For the first time yours is a house

of death,—yours the bitterness of a *First Bereavement*.\*

By the help of Him who is the healer of the broken-hearted I would desire to pour some drops of consolation into your wounded bosom. This little book is intended to be seen by no eyes but weeping ones. It addresses no hearts but broken ones. It is to speak of sorrows with which a stranger can not intermeddle. The world at such a time is often unwilling to make allowances for the sacredness of grief. He who wept at the grave of Bethany puts no such unkind arrest on the outflowings of sorrow. He “wept with those that wept.” He has told us to “go and do likewise.”

I know not what this your first lesson in the school of Bereavement is. It may be “the

\* “Ah, what lessons our dear Lord is now teaching you, lessons which angels can never learn;—teaching by heart what was only known before by rote.”—*Lady Powerscourt's Letters*.

desire of your eyes taken away by a stroke." It may be a beloved wife or husband, the sharer of your every joy and sorrow, suddenly and mysteriously removed, and you are left to shed the tears of disconsolate widowhood. It may be some fond parent, whose smile gladdens and hallows every memory of the past, and now you find yourself treading orphaned and alone the remainder of the pilgrimage. It may be some darling child, who has imperceptibly been entwining its every heartstring around you, wrenched from your embrace—a little light extinguished in your dwelling—the favorite star of the firmament quenched in the darkness of death; one of those whose names are touchingly described as "always on grave-stones; and their sweet smiles, their heavenly eyes, their singular words and ways, among the buried treasure of yearning hearts. In how many families do you hear the legend, that all the goodness and graces of the living are nothing to the peculiar charms of *one who is not!*"

Added to all this, the trial may have come

with appalling suddenness. The hurricane may have swept your loved one down in the midst of brightest sunshine. Yesterday all was joyous and happy; to-day you are hurled by one terrible blow from the pinnacles of earthly bliss. Seated amid the wreck and ruin of all that on earth was held dear,—poor, lonely, desolate, you can say, with the touching emphasis of the broken-hearted Patriarch, “I AM bereaved!” The yoke, too, may have been early put upon your neck, or the summons may have come at the time when the joy of your heart could be least spared; when most prized, most needed, most loved! It may have been some cherished flower, rich with future promise, which has in a night drooped and withered and fallen; or some life of signal usefulness to the church or the world. Ten thousand withered sapless trunks in the forest left untouched by the axe; the freshest and strongest and greenest marked out first to fall!

What! can it be? Is it indeed a sober



truth? a sad reality? Or may it not prove some wild dream, some feverish vision which the night will dispel? Will not the morning chase away these terrible pictures of untold desolation? Alas! the morning comes, but with it the waking up only to a more vivid consciousness that all is too painfully real. These grey tints of early dawn are falling on a silent grave! "Joseph is not and Simeon is not." With the drooping and blighting of that cherished gourd,

"There's not on earth the living thing  
To which the withered heart can cling."

How strange and thrilling are the feelings with which you find yourself now amid the world's familiar din and bustle! The unsympathizing crowd, all unconscious of what is transacting within your threshold, are hurrying by as before. They are exchanging with one another the same joyous smiles, they are clad in the same gay attire, the same merry chimes mark the passing hour, the same "ringing laugh of childhood" is heard

in the streets; and yet to you, all is sicklied over with inveterate sadness; every scene and association which whispers joy to others, reads but a homily of sorrow to your aching heart. You now can well understand words in the vocabulary of sorrow which once seemed strange—" *Wilderness world*," " *Valley of tears*." How call this world, you were once led to ask, "*wilderness*," and "*tearful*," which is sparkling on every side with tints of loveliness and vocal with joy? Right well do you know it *now*! Every flower has faded on your path. The silent chamber!—it echoes to your lonely voice. The happy fire-side circle!—there is a vacant seat. The favorite walk,—the cherished haunt!—the smile that made it so is fled. Ah! life has indeed become like the "flat, bare, oozy tide-mud, when the blue sparkling wave, with all its company of gliding boats and white-winged ships, the music of oars and chiming waters, has gone down." Material nature itself, the earth around you, the very firmament above you, seem to have shared in some terrible

catastrophe, as if wan and colored with ashes. You breathe a different air, you are lighted by a different sun; in one terrible sense is the Scripture saying expounded, "old things have passed away, and all things have become new."\*

Reader, I can imagine you now, solitary and alone in your chamber, your eye dim with weeping; your mind filled with ten thousand conflicting feelings to which you dare not give utterance; the holy visions of the past flitting before you like shadows on the wall; the future all darkness and mystery. Your pining heart in the first gush of its bitterness turns away, refusing to be comforted; the feelings of an old sufferer are too

\* "As an iceberg comes grinding between two ships, sailing joyfully in company, so death rises up between these hearts, parting them for ever. The man awakes alone! and lo! the strength of his soul is departed! Nature is silent. For him the sun shines not; the beauty and grandeur of nature exist only as light to the blind and music to the deaf. The whole world of nature, art, poetry, music, painting, all are buried for him in that one grave."—*Shadows on the Hebrew Mountains* Mrs. Stowe.

truthfully the transcript of your own. "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." (Ruth i. 20). You may be even unable at first to get any comfort at the mercy-seat. You seek in vain to buffet the surges of grief; there is no light in the darkness, no break in the cloud,—"deep is calling unto deep."

Be comforted! "The Lord *will* command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer to the God of my life." Yes! "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted," unschooled and undisciplined in these fiery trials;—He who brought you into the furnace will lead you through! He has never failed in the case of any of His "poor afflicted ones" to realize His own precious promise, "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." All is mystery and enigma to you *now*,—nothing but crossed plans, and blighted hopes, and a future of unutterable desolation. But He will yet vindicate His dealings. I

believe even on earth He often leads us to see and learn "the need be;" and if *not* on earth, at least in glory, there will be a grand revelation of ineffable wisdom and love in this very trial which is now bowing your head like a bulrush, and making your eyes a very fountain of tears.\*

But though I have dwelt on the depth of your bereavement, I do not write to make more tears to flow. My design is rather to dry them;—to mitigate these aching pangs, and lead you submissively to say, "Thy will be done." It is not a time when the mind is

\* "He is in all providences, be they never so bitter, never so afflicting, never so smarting, never so destructive to our earthly comforts. Christ is in them all; His love, His wisdom, His mercy, His pity, and compassion is in them all, every cup is of His preparing; it is Jesus, your best friend, (O ye poor, poor believers,) who most dearly loves you, that appoints all providences, orders them all, overrules, moderates, and sanctifies them all, and in His due time will make them profitable unto you, that you shall one day have cause to praise and bless His name for them all. Oh that we could but believe all this, and could by faith look unto our Jesus in all dark providences, and by faith behold this Jesus managing of them, and believe His love, wisdom, tenderness, and faithfulness in all."—*Bunyan's Heart's Ease*.

able or disposed to follow pages of continuous thought. Let me only throw out one or two simple reflections for your meditation, which I pray the Holy Ghost the Comforter to bring home to you. May "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulations," make usable to "comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Cor. i. 3, 4.)

A FIRST TRIAL!—*Was it not needed?* Has not the world been becoming too much for you;—engrossing your affections, alienating your love, dimming your view of "the better country"? Ah! commune with your own heart, and say, was not this (terrible though it be) the *very discipline required?* *Less* would not have done, to wean me from the poor nothings of earth. I was lulled in a guilty self-security. I was living in a state of awful forgetfulness of my God,—insensible of His mercies,—unmindful of His goodness,—taking my blessings as matters of course,—*a secret*

*atheism!* And, more than this, of the awful magnitude of "things not seen" I had no vivid consciousness. I felt as if surely death could never disturb my dream of happiness. He had been going his rounds on every side, but I never could realize the time when the terrible invader could rush upon my loved circle and make such *a gap as this!*

Dear Reader! if such be aught of a truthful picture, I ask you, was it not *kindness, unspeakable kindness* in thy covenant God to break (though with a voice of thunder) this perilous dream?—to bring back "by terrible things in righteousness" thy truant, wandering, treacherous heart, and fix once more thy traitor affections on Himself as their only satisfying portion? "Your Heavenly Father never thought this world's painted glory a gift worthy of you, and therefore He hath taken out the best thing it had in your sight that He might Himself fill the heart He had wounded *with Himself.*"\*

The threads of life were weaved into too bright a tissue, God had to snap them!—The loved one thou art now mourning was a *clay idol*. He had to break it in pieces. He had to drag it from the usurped throne that He might resume that throne Himself. He gave thee prosperity—but thou couldst not or *wouldst* not use it for His glory. It was a curse to thee! It was that awful thing, “un-sanctified prosperity.” Thou wert living on the borders of that terrible state—“because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.” He would not suffer thee to be left alone, to settle in the downy nest of self-ease and forgetfulness. He has roused thee on the wing, and pointed thy upward soarings to their only true resting-place, in His own everlasting presence, and friendship, and love. “Ah! it is indeed humiliating,” says the same holy man whose words we have last quoted, “that we require so many stripes to *force* us, as it were, to God, when there is enough in Him to draw us to Himself, and to keep us with Himself for ever!” But better surely all



these stripes than to be left unchecked in our career of forgetfulness. It has been well said, "the sorest word God ever spoke to Israel was, 'Why should ye be stricken any more?'" This wayward heart was throwing out its fibres on every side and rooting them down to earth. He had to unroot them!—to wrench these grovelling affections from the things that are of "earth, earthy," and fasten them on Himself as their all in all !\*

A FIRST TRIAL! *Was there not graciousness in it?* At first sight this may appear a strange admission to demand. There may seem no star in that black sky, no alleviating drop in the bitter, bitter cup. But see that you give not way to guilty murmurings, lest a worse thing come upon you ;—lest God may show you "greater things than these !" Pause and ask, have there been in your affliction no

\* "How great a mercy," writes Richard Baxter to a tried friend, "was it to live thirty-eight years under God's wholesome discipline! O my God! I thank Thee for the like discipline of fifty-eight years! How safe is this in comparison of full prosperity and pleasure!"

mitigating circumstances, no gracious consolations, “no tempering of the wind to the shorn lamb,” no “staying of His rough wind in the day of His east wind?” “Have you ever marked,” says a writer who knew well herself what the furnace was,—“have you ever marked His gentleness when bringing a painful message? how he usually calls by name, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ ‘Moses, Moses?’” \*

Yes! I verily believe that there are few afflicted children of God but can echo the expression of the tried Psalmist, “I will sing of *mercy* and of judgment.” (Mercy first, then judgment!) I ask you in this hour to think of your *mercies*, and let each of them be a voice of comfort to you. What are they? Have there been kind friends sent to share the bitterness of your sorrow, and give you the tribute of their valued sympathy? Ask those who, from peculiar circumstances, may have been denied this boon;—who in their hour of trial have been left unbefriended to weep in

\* *Lady Powerscourt's Letters.*

silence and in solitude their first tears—ask *them*, *Is there no mercy in this?* Again, your *chief* blessing may have been snatched away from you, but many precious ties yet remain; and you will find, as one most blessed and endearing element in the loss you have sustained, that it knits together the broken links in holier and more sacred bonds than before. Ask those who have carried their *all* to the grave—who have been left like a solitary tree of the forest *alone!*—all around them swept down!—ask *them*, if it be no blessing to have the cherished voice of doubly-endearred survivors to mingle together common tears, and recount the hallowed memories of the departed? Or, better than all, *Is the loss you mourn the eternal gain of the absent one?* Oh! ask those who have to muse in dumb agony over the thought of those gone unprepared to meet their God, ask *them*, *Is it no small mercy* (nay, rather is it not the highest and most exalted of all consolations,—that which disarms death and bereavement of all its bitterness,—) *that “the loved and lost” are the crowned and*

glorified? "We may not here below," says St. Cyprian, "put on dark robes of mourning, when they above have put on the white robes of glory." Does not this hush all murmurs and dry all tears, that the great end of their being has been faithfully fulfilled? "The birds are fled away, having outgrown our care, to fill a bough in the tree of life, and charm on to follow after them."

"She is not dead, the child of our affection,  
But gone into that school  
Where she no longer needs our poor protection,  
But Christ Himself doth rule.

"In that great cloister's stillness and seclusion,  
By guardian angels led,  
Safe from temptation, safe from sin's pollution,  
She *lives* whom we call *dead*."\*

\* "I have had six children, and I bless God for his free grace that they are all *with* Christ, or *in* Christ, and my mind is now at rest concerning them. My desire was that they should have served Christ on earth, but if God will choose to have them rather serve Him in heaven, I have nothing to object to it; His will be done."—*Elliot*.

"Let me be thankful for the pleasing hope, that though God loves my child too well to permit it to return to me, He will ere long bring me to it, and then that endeared paternal affection which would have been a cord to tie me to earth,

THE FIRST TRIAL! *Is there not a specially loud Voice in it?* Yes! I say so with a solemn conviction of its truth—You *may* have heavier trials and severer losses than this, but never will God's voice speak louder to you than now. *It is the loudest knock that can be heard at the door of your heart!* Felix might have heard another (perhaps even a more powerful)

and have added new pangs to my removal from it, will be as a golden chain to draw me upwards, and add one further charm and joy even to Paradise itself. Was this my desolation, this my sorrow, to part with thee for a few days, that I might receive thee for ever (*Philemon 15*), and find thee what thou art? It is for no language but that of heaven to describe the sacred joy which such a meeting must occasion."—*Philip Doddridge*.

We are told of Luther's daughter, "She expired, and as it were, fell asleep in the arms of her father. He repeated often, The will of God be done, my daughter has still a Father in heaven." And when the people came to assist in bearing out the body, and, according to the common custom, told him that they shared his affliction, he said to them, "Be not troubled, I have sent a saint to heaven. Oh, could we have such a death—*such a death*, I could accept it this hour."

"All our dear relations that died in Christ are triumphantly singing hallelujahs in the highest heavens. While we are fighting, sighing, and sobbing here below, they are with blessed Jesus above, according to His prayer for them, seeing His glory and participating in it."—*John Bunyan*.

sermon from Paul "on righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come," but *I* believe he would not have again trembled, as he did, when for THE FIRST *time* these appalling realities were presented to his mind.

*A first trial*, then, has its solemn responsibilities! Let it not die away, like the subsiding thunder, unsanctified and unimproved. Let it be accompanied with the trembling response—"Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Seek to feel that God has thereby some great end in view—some wise meaning to subserve—some gracious lesson to teach. *Inquire what it is.* Depend upon it, your mind will never be in a more impressible state than *now*. Afflictions, like other voices, if unheeded, only harden and render callous. Let the present be regarded as the most solemn messenger you ever *can* hear, proclaiming, "*Prepare to meet thy God.*" It may be now or never with you! Feel as if this bereavement were some gracious precursor sent to give you the timely warning, "Be ye also ready!"

The first "pin taken from your earthly tabernacle!"—Let it be as a monitory angel telling you to strike your tent and pitch it nearer heaven;—"Arise and depart, for this is *not* your rest!" As we have seen the timid bird hopping from bough to bough till it reach the topmost branch, and then winging its flight to the sky; so with the soul—affliction is designed to drive it from bough to bough, from refuge to refuge, higher and still higher, till at last it soars upward to the Heaven of its God.\*

THE FIRST TRIAL. *Is it not a befitting, THE most befitting season to give yourself unreservedly to the service of God? Your hold is loosened from the world. Like a vessel driven from its moorings, you are drifting unpiloted on a tempestuous sea. Let these raging waters urge you to take shelter in the alone quiet*

\* "Your mansion above is filling, and your cottage on earth emptying, and what is the language of this dispensation? Onwards, onwards! Upwards, upwards!"—*Helen Plumptre.*

haven. Oh ! if at this season you are *without God*!—a stranger to the power of religion—uncheered by its precious, gracious promises, I pity you,—from the bottom of my heart, I grieve for you ! In the wide world there is no sadder spectacle than the poor and unfriended, the orphaned or widowed, or withered heart, ungladdened by one holy beam of Bible consolation ! The dark valley of the Shadow of Death traversed ; and not one solitary ray falling from the Star of Bethlehem ! Or equally mournful if the heart be unhumbled—if it refuse to bear the rod—if the death chamber only re-echo with guilty murmurings, and the chastened soul be unable to point to any “ peaceable fruit of righteousness,” as the result of the Divine dealings ! There is a depth of meaning in what a son of consolation has said, as he mingles exhortations with solaces -- “unsanctified trials become deep afflictions.”

On the other hand, if you are no stranger to these exceeding great and precious promises, or if till now a stranger, you are ready



to avail yourself of this *one only solace* in such an hour, what a hallowed experience yours is! With all the unutterable, untold depths of your sorrow, I know not (a *happier* I dare not call it) but a time fuller of more chastened joy than the mourning Christian's chamber, when the world is shut out, and he is *alone with God!* The sun of his earthly prosperity set, and set it may be *for ever!* but this only allowing the bright clustering constellations of Divine consolation to bedeck the dark firmament;—the stars of Bible promise coming out one by one like ministering angels, and telling of bright scenes which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived!” As in a time of rain and cloud the distant hills look nearer, so do the everlasting hills of glory appear, in the cloudy and dark day, nearer, brighter, more glorious,—sparkling with ten thousand rills of love and covenant-faithfulness unseen and unobserved before! If thus cheered, yours is indeed an *enviable* lot. The man in the glitter of worldly prosperity is *not* to be envied. But *you* are! You have got

what the world with all its promises and blandishments can not give, and which the world with all its deceitfulness can not take away,—*the Eternal God Himself*, who can fill all blanks, and compensate for all losses; who can make that solitary chamber where you are now mourning and weeping, a *Patmos*, bright as the lovely *Ægean Isle* was to John, with manifestations of a Saviour's presence and love.\* Remember affliction has always been God's peculiar method of dealing with His own people. It is because He *loves* them He *chastises* them. "I have *chosen* thee," says He, "in the *furnace of affliction*." "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" As

\* "If death did come alone to us, it would be terrible to us indeed, its ghastly countenance would affright us. But here is the comfort, that Christ our dearest Lord will come *with* death to sweeten it to us, and support us under it. \* \* Though it be the king of terrors in itself, and a grim porter, yet by His coming with it, it shall be the king of comforts."

—*John Bunyan.*

"God's ichor fills the hearts that bleed,  
The best fruit loads the broken bough;  
And in the wounds our sufferings plough  
Immortal love sows sovereign seed."

an old writer says, "He instructs His scholars in the school of the *Law*, and in the school of the *Gospel*, but He has a third class for advanced learners, and that is the *school of Trial*." A sublime dialogue between a saint on earth and a saint in heaven, represents each member of the white-robed multitude as having graduated in this same school,—“What are these arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? These are they that have come out of *great tribulation*.”\*

Seek to exercise simple faith in the wisdom of God's dealings,—the unswerving rectitude of His dispensations. He does *all well*, and nothing but what is well. Nothing can come wrong to you that comes from His hand. Confide where you can not understand. Trust where you can not trace. Repress all guilty murmurings, check all rebellious thoughts, “Get,” as a tried saint expresses it, “your

\* “When Bishop Latimer's landlord informed him that he never knew a trial, “God,” was the reply, “can not be here.”

“hows and whys’ crucified, and resolve all into, and rest satisfied in, infinite wisdom tempered with covenant love; \* \* He may teach by contraries, but no one teaches like Him.” Seek to magnify His name by the sweet exercise of the grace of *patience*. This is a grace peculiar to the saints on earth. It is unknown in heaven, where there are no trials to call it into exercise. Glorify God “in the fires. There is something touchingly beautiful in the sentiment of Edward Bickersteth at his dying hour. “This day, Saturday, 16th, he called one of us to him, and directed this message to his people for the next day, ‘The prayers of this congregation are desired for the Rector of this Parish, not that his life may be spared, but that He may through his affliction glorify God, by fresh exercises of faith, patience, and resignation, and that when the Lord’s work is accomplished, he may depart hence and be with the Lord.’ ” Seek, afflicted one, to feel how light this heavy cross is, in comparison with what your sins deserved. Ay, and what a

drop in the ocean of suffering it is, in comparison with what the Prince of sufferers underwent, whose solitary experience was this,—  
“ALL thy waves and thy billows have gone over me!” He could make a challenge to a whole world of sufferers which to this hour remains unanswered, and ever *will* remain—  
“*Was there ever any sorrow like unto MY sorrow?*” Child of God! if such indeed thou art, believe it, there is not one drop of wrath in the bitter cup thou art now drinking. He took all that was bitter out of it, and left it *a cup of love!*

As this your first trial is a new and never-to-be-forgotten epoch in your natural life, let it be emphatically so in your spiritual. Hear a voice in it saying, “Arise and call upon thy God.” The once beaten footroad to the place of prayer may have been suffered to be choked up, and covered with the rank weeds of worldliness and neglect. Let affliction prove as a sharp sickle, mowing them down, and once more opening a way to an unfrequented and

deserted mercy-seat. Be it yours henceforth to arise *above* your trial, in the only way in which you would wish to rise above it; viz. to rise above the world and to live with God! Let your walk be close and habitual with Him. Let your citizenship be in heaven. A little while and the night of weeping will be over, and a gentle hand in a tearless world will dry up the very source of tears. Oh let this "blessed hope" reconcile you to the severest discipline of earth. Think often of *heaven*; and that though there be night (ay, seasons of deepest starless midnight) *here*, "*there is no night THERE.*"—No bereavement *there* either to be experienced or dreaded! Every day is bringing you nearer that *home* of joy! nearer reunion with those glorified, one of whom, it may be, you are now mourning; nearer Him who is now standing with the hoarded treasures of Eternity in His hand, and the hoarded love of Eternity in His heart! How will one brief moment there, banish in everlasting oblivion all the pangs and sorrows of the vale of weeping! "When you have

passed," says a holy man of God who is now realizing the truth of his own words, "when you have passed to the other side of that narrow river, to the which we shall so shortly come, you will have no doubt that all you have undergone was little enough for the desired end."

"Soon and for ever,  
Such promise our trust,  
Though ashes to ashes,  
And dust unto dust;—

Soon and for ever  
Our union shall be  
Made perfect, our glorious  
Redeemer, in Thee!

When the sins and the sorrows  
Of time shall be o'er,  
Its pangs and its partings  
Remembered no more,—

Where life can not fail,  
And where death can not sever,  
Christians with Christ shall be  
Soon and for ever."

Meanwhile, return to life's duties with the spirit of "a weaned child," exhibiting meek

acquiescence in the sovereign will of your God. Yes! *return to life's duties!* It is by no means the smallest part of your trial thus to go out to breathe the cheerless air of the world again, and mingle with a saddened and crushed spirit amid scenes where all is uncongenial. But impossible as it may now seem, "the waves of life," to use the striking words of a writer already quoted, "must and will settle back to their usual flow where that treasured bark has gone down. For how imperiously, how coolly, in disregard of all one's feeling, does the hard, cold, uninteresting course of daily realities move on! Still must we eat and drink, and sleep and wake again—still bargain, buy, sell, ask and answer questions—pursue in short a thousand shadows, though all interest in them be over, the cold mechanical habit of living remaining, after all vital interest in it has fled."

But "as thy day, so shall thy strength be." You know not until you make trial of it all the blessed fulness and truthfulness of this



precious promise. "You are about," says one deeply experienced, "to enter into realities of consolation you have never imagined to be in God." You have heard ten thousand broken hearts tell in no sembled words what their experience has been. "We have been wonderfully supported." And what was the secret of it? Let a much-tried Apostle answer:—"All men forsook me \* \* Notwithstanding, THE LORD stood by me and strengthened me!" He proportions grace to trial. Your extremity is *His* opportunity. "We went through the flood on foot," says the Psalmist; "THERE did we rejoice in Him." Beautiful picture of every saint! or rather, glorious testimony to the sustaining grace of God; a firm footing amid the threatening waves!—nay more, "THERE!" (when the billows were around us; in the very *midst of our affliction*)—"THERE did we rejoice in Him!" He will deal tenderly, wisely, lovingly, with you. God our Maker "giveth songs in the night." He does not "pour down waterfloods on the mown grass." He *considers* His people's case. "What-

ever our need be, He is below it; underneath are the everlasting arms!" There is no Bible figure on which the Christian mourner dwells with such delight as that of *the Refiner of silver*, sitting by the furnace of His own lighting, tempering its heat—regulating the fury of the flames—quenching the violence of the fires—designing all, ALL—not to consume and destroy, but to purify, brighten, refine!

I commend you to God and to the word of His grace. I commend you above all to the tenderness of that human sympathy which exists alone in Jesus. Angels and archangels, never having had sorrow, cannot *sympathize*. The glorious Being before whom they cast their crowns *can!* for sorrow tracked *His* footsteps, from the manger to the grave.\*

We never can understand the depth and

\* It is striking to notice the cases of death and bereavement which during His ministry on earth called forth the exalted sympathies of His human nature,—an *only son!* an *only daughter!* an *only brother!*

preciousness of *His* sympathy until we come to need it. "I have had a deep, a very deep wound," says Lady Powerscourt, "the trial has been very severe, but how should I have known Him as a brother born for adversity without it?" \* \* \* He has gone through every class in our wilderness-school, He seems intent to fill up every gap love has been forced to make. One of His errands from heaven was, to "bind up the broken-hearted."\* Let your trial only endear Him to you more and more, Hear as it were the voice of the departed, stealing down from the heights of glory, and thus, as Boaz said to Ruth, gently rebuking your fast-falling tears,—"It is true that I am thy near kinsman, howbeit there is a Kinsman nearer than I!" (Ruth, iii. 12.) Though earthly ties have been severing, He still "lives and loves." "She was," said good old Philip Henry, when writing of Lady Puleston, who died in 1658, "She was the best friend I had on earth, but my Friend in

\* *Lady Powerscourt's Letters.*

heaven is still where He was, and He will never leave me nor forsake me."\*

Go forward to a dark future, fearlessly re-

\* "He Himself calls to you with His own tender, loving voice, 'I am He that was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore,' I live *with* thee, my poor afflicted one—I live *for* thee—I live *in* thee—I live *with* thee—never to leave thee by night or by day, in sickness or in health, in thy drooping mornings or in thy sad evenings, when the heart faints and the spirits sink, when faith is weak and nature is strong.—I live *with* thee, to fill the place of him who is gone, to do that which no creature can do, and MORE than fill it, much, much more!—I live *with* thee, to comfort and to satisfy yea to sanctify—I live *with* thee, my child, when every earthly prop sinks and dies. I live *for* thee in heaven, to plead thy cause, to communicate grace from above, grace in every time of need; the hour, the moment. I live *in* thee, to sustain thee as thy very life. Such is His sweet and tender voice, the tender, loving voice of His own loving heart."—*Evans*.

"Whatsoever, whomsoever you have lost, you have not lost your Jesus, your best Friend, your heavenly Husband; you have His eye, His tender, watchful, provident eye upon you still, you have His ear open to your cries still; yea, you have His everlasting arms underneath you to sustain you still, for else you would sink. \* \* To have a friend in heaven, and such a friend, so wise, so powerful, so faithful, so merciful, so sensibly affected with all our misery, so tender, so able, and so willing to bear and help us!—I say this is infinitely better than all the friends that ever we had or could have on earth."—*Bunyan's Heart's Ease*.

lying on His “exceeding great and precious promises.” The future is not yours but His; He is a rich provider and a wise provider. Take as your wilderness-watchword, “*I shall not want.*” He will “guide you (nay, He is guiding you) by His counsel,” “and afterward”—“AFTERWARD!”—it is not for you or me to scan that word! It may be one of painful significance; it may be *after* much discipline, it may be *after* a rough and rugged and thorny road; it may be *after* trial upon trial, and wave upon wave. But even on the darkest and dreariest view of the future, though this your trial should prove but the commencement of a lengthened “Valley of Baca” (weeping)—one continuous path of sadness,—remember what follows that “*afterward*”—“*He will receive you into Glory!*” Soon the last ripple of sorrow will be heard murmuring on the other side of Jordan, and *then*—every vestige of its sound will die away, and that *for ever!* Entering the triumphal arch of Heaven, you will read in living characters the history of a sinless, sorrowless future: “And

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Rev. xxi. 4.

THE END.















T3-BAE-418

